

WORK AND WIN

An Interesting Weekly for Young America.

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NEW YORK, MAY 27, 1904.

Price 5 Cents.

FRED FEARNOT AFTER THE MOONSHINERS; OR, THE "BAD" MEN OF KENTUCKY.

By HAL STANDISH.



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Fred Fearnot After the Moonshiners

OR,

The "Bad" Men of Kentucky.

By HAL STANDISH.

CHAPTER I.

FRED AND TERRY GO TO KENTUCKY.

One day when Fred Fearnot was sitting in his office down on Wall Street his friend Middleton, whose office was next door to Fred's, came into the office considerably excited.

He held in his hand a letter which he had just received from a lawyer down in Kentucky.

"Look here, Fearnot," he asked, "have you ever been in Kentucky?"

"Yes, several times."

"What sort of a country is it?"

"Why, it's a splendid country, Middleton. Haven't you heard it said often that the finest horses and the most beautiful women in America are raised in Kentucky?"

"Yes, I have heard it said many a time, and I remember

seeing some of the belles of that state here in New York. But what sort of a country is it, aside from horses and women?"

"Well, it depends upon what sort of a state you mean. It is the famous blue grass country, you know, and its climate is fine, particularly in the mountains. There is more or less malaria along the Mississippi, where the soil is almost black and as rich as mud. But why these inquiries? Are you interested in Kentucky?"

"Yes. An old uncle of mine has died there and left me three thousand acres of land in the eastern part of the state."

"In the eastern part of the state, eh?"

"Yes," and he handed the letter to Fred, saying:

"There is a notice from a lawyer asking me for instructions, or rather to come out and see the land and take possession of it."

"Well, the eastern part of the state is mountainous. They make moonshine whisky and shoot revenue agents, and anybody else they take a dislike to. Let me tell you that three thousand acres of land is a pretty good windfall, old fellow, and let me congratulate you. It is a pity, though, that your land doesn't lie in middle Kentucky, in the blue grass region. There the land is very valuable, and of course commands a good price."

Fred read the letter carefully, and as he handed it back he asked the broker what he was going to do about the matter.

"Why, I must sell it, I guess, for I don't wish to go there to live, for I'm neither a farmer, a moonshiner, nor a revenue agent. Still, I think I ought to get a lot of money out of it."

"Say, how long has your uncle been living in Kentucky?"

"Oh, I guess he has been living there for twenty-five or thirty years, but I believe he resided in another part of the state. I think he is running a farm nearer the middle of the state than where this land lies. That, though, he left to some relative. He never approved of my turning Wall Street broker; so he left me that wild land up in the mountains in the hope of drawing me away from New York. Hanged if I know what to do about it!"

"Well, you may have a pretty big prize, Middleton. There are some fine coal lands in Kentucky, and I believe some oil lands, also. I once had something to do with putting an oil mill out in that state, but it was pretty close to the Ohio river. I finally sold out my interest and left, for there were too many people living out there who were fond of shooting at other folks."

"Look here, Fearnot," said the broker, "if you'll go out there with me to help me find and examine the land, the titles, and everything else that I ought to know about, I'll pay your expenses."

"Good! I'll go," said Fred. "I'm tired of Wall Street, anyway. I want to get out in the woods somewhere with a good Winchester on my shoulder and my old Mexican blanket strapped on my back. I want to camp out in the woods and eat bear and deer steak. You and Brown both promised that you would go out hunting somewhere with Terry and I, and perhaps this is the time to do it. I don't know whether there is any big game in the region of your inheritance or not, but I do know that up in Kentucky and West Virginia there are a good many bears and a few deer, besides, a lot of local feuds."

"All right; I'll be glad to have Terry go, too. I don't know, though, whether Brown really meant what he said or not. But I think that you and Terry and I would be sufficient."

"Oh, yes, of course. But are you good at marching?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, can you tramp all day over the mountains and through the woods on foot?"

"Oh, yes! I guess I can keep up with you and Terry."

"Well, let's close up our offices for the present and take a month's vacation and go out there and see your land. This is the best season for it, for the snow has all left the ground, even in the mountains, except away out in the extreme northwest. I presume that you have got the same gun that you had when you were out in the gold fields."

"Yes, and the old suit of clothes, too."

"All right, then. Let's close up and go to New Era, where Terry is."

"Say, I thought Terry was at Fredonia."

"No; I had a letter from him yesterday, and he is up at New Era. I don't know that he is under any engagement to stay there, but we will find out by going up."

A few days later Fred and Middleton entered the office at New Era, giving Terry a most agreeable surprise.

Of course Dick and Joe were not acquainted with Middleton, but Terry introduced them as soon as he shook hands with him.

They were both dressed just as they expected to remain dressed out in the mountains of Kentucky.

They had their rifles along, also.

"Look here, what in thunder does this mean?" Terry inquired. "If you are looking for big game up here around New Era you will be greatly disappointed, let me tell you. A burglar was shot at the other night up here, but he got away. That's the biggest game we have in this country, and they are rather scarce, too."

"Terry, we are going out after elephants, tigers and rhinoceros," said Fred, "and we stopped over here to see if you were ready to go with us."

"Why the deuce didn't you notify me, so I could be ready?"

"Plenty of time. We will wait for you. All you have to do is to take a bath, clean yourself up all right, change your clothes and strap your blanket to your shoulders, and presto! off we go."

Then Fred explained why he was going to Kentucky with Middleton.

"What part of Kentucky?" Terry asked.

"In the mountains, of course!"

Terry looked at Fred and then at Middleton, shook his head, and then asked if he knew that that was about the most dangerous part of the whole continent for a stranger to go hunting.

"No," said Middleton.

"Well, let me tell you that the mountainous district of Kentucky has a population that is on the shoot every hour of the day; that there are hundreds of men in the mountains there who cut a notch in the stocks of their rifles when they kill a man. Frequently they meet and count the notches, and the man who can show the greatest number of notches on the stock of his rifle is made a hero of."

"Well, I didn't know it was so bad as all that."

"You didn't, eh? Don't you read the papers?"

"Yes, but I don't read Kentucky papers."

"Well, even the New York papers tell about the feuds in Kentucky."

"Oh, drop that, Terry," said Fred. "Middleton had an uncle to die out there a short while ago and leave him three thousand acres of land. A lawyer has written to him about it, suggesting that he come out and look at it, and either settle down there and live, or dispose of it, and offering his services in the matter. Middleton has asked me to go out with him, and I suggested that you go, too, because you can speak the Kentucky tongue, and you are very popular with the moonshiners out there."

Terry laughed and said:

"All right; I'm rusting out here, anyway, and need a bit of exercise."

"Great Scott!" put in Dick Duncan. "You haven't been here a week yet. He's been loafing around in Fredonia, making love to his sweetheart and trotting her on his knees of evenings, and I'm sure he isn't a bit rusty."

That evening Middleton accepted Fred's and Terry's hospitality at the cottage, where Amalie and Margie were the lights of the household.

Both the girls protested against their going out West again.

Margie said that she would rather her brother would go fighting Indians and grizzly bears in the far West than to go hunting among the badmen of Kentucky.

"Why, I read nearly every day of shootings and killings in that state; that a decent white man couldn't ride across the mountains without being shot at a few times, and if he were alone he'd never be able to get through."

Fred and Terry laughed at her, and said that they had been out there all over the mountains and had come out alive and without a bullet-hole in them anywhere.

"Mr. Middleton," said she, "don't you ever go a hundred yards away from them when you strike the mountains out there?"

"Have you ever been out there?" Middleton asked her.

"No, indeed; and there are not railroads enough in this country to pull me out to the mountains of Kentucky. I wouldn't let my husband go out there under any circumstances. Yet I know he is as brave a man as ever lived."

Fred put his hand up to his mouth, and in a stage whisper said to Middleton:

"She thinks he is a brave man because he married her."

"Yes," she replied, proudly. "It required considerable courage on his part to marry the sister of Fred Fearnot; but if you want to see a brave man just look at Mr. Jencks, and then at his wife. He has to look up to her. She is half a head taller than he is. When she married him she actually promised to love and cherish and obey; yet he does the obeying."

"That's right," said Joe. "I am willing to obey such a wife as I've got. I only wish I had a half a dozen more like her."

"What's that?" exclaimed Amalie, sharply, and Fred

and Terry fairly roared with merriment at Joe's slip of the tongue.

Joe, of course, explained that he didn't mean what he said, saying:

"Just one wife like you is enough."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Terry. "What interpretation do you put on that remark, Amalie?"

"Oh, he means all right there," she replied.

"You bet I do!" put in Joe.

The next morning Fred, Terry and Middleton took the train for Wheeling, in West Virginia.

There they could make inquiries to settle the question as to whether they would make their way into the mountains of Kentucky on foot or on horseback.

Of course they went provided with money enough to do either.

They might take a boat down the river to Miller's Landing.

"You remember that old place, Terry. But how far it is from that place to where your land lies, Middleton, I am not able to say. We can find a great many mountaineers at Wheeling or at Parkersburg."

"Now, Fred," put in Terry, "I think we will have more fun if we will take a boat down to Miller's Landing. We were there some three or four months ago, and you know what a jolly time we had at the old tavern on the banks of the river."

"Say, what do you mean by having a jolly time?" asked the broker.

"Why, we had to wait there for several days to catch a boat to take us down. The family that kept the hotel had two or three beautiful, rosy-cheeked girls who could dance all night, I can tell you; and it seemed that every family for miles around had daughters who came to the hotel to visit the landlord's girls. We got acquainted with a whole crowd of them, every one of whom was willing to marry any good-looking fellow that they thought was able to take care of them. That's why I want to stop here and see who of them are married and who are still single. Then, too, we can pick up a guide there who will lead us right up through the mountains to where your land lies. You have got your papers with you, haven't you?"

"No; I've only got the lawyer's letter telling me all about it, and where the land lies, and of course I'll have to see him before we return."

"Well, he tells you just where the land lies, doesn't he?"

"Oh, yes! It is a number of lots, and I suppose it is now known as the Middleton tract. When we strike the county I guess any resident there will know where the land lies."

In due time they reached the city of Wheeling, which, of course, is a very busy city, where there are immense iron works and various kinds of manufactures.

Fred and Terry had played there once when running

a baseball team, and had made the acquaintance of a good many sporting men.

All of them registered at the hotel where they stopped as coming from New York.

Before ten o'clock that night they were visited by over a score of sporting men, who naturally wanted to know what had brought them to Wheeling.

Fred told them that they were merely going down into the mountains of Kentucky to look at a big tract of land that had been bequeathed to their friend Middleton.

"That's why we brought our rifles along," said Fred, "for we have been told that there is some game away out in the sparsely settled part of the country."

One of them laughed and asked Fred if he knew what a moonshiner was.

"Yes, I know the animal well; I have been up against him in several sections of the country, and have exchanged compliments with them."

"Well, let me tell you, you may expect to run across some of them in the mountains of Kentucky, and besides moonshiners there is a big number of others, known simply as badmen."

"Oh, yes! I've met those sort of fellows, too. You've got bad men right here in Wheeling whose tactics, of course, are somewhat different from those in Kentucky. But you know Terry and I are very peaceful boys. In fact Terry is now in disguise."

At Fred's request they got one of the sporting men to take them to the public library, where, hanging on the wall was a large map of Kentucky.

They examined it closely, and decided that the best way for them to reach Middleton's inheritance was to take a steamer down the river to Miller's Landing.

"Say, have any of you fellows ever stopped at that place?" Terry asked.

"No," they all said; "but it is a little insignificant landing, a settlement of probably two or three hundred population. Oil was shipped from there, but not in very great quantities."

"Well, we went there once," said Terry. "We will have to march over the mountains, for it would be rather difficult to find provender for horses."

"Well, you'll find it pretty tough walking, for there are very few roads over those mountains other than what are known as settlement roads."

"All right. It is just the sort of country we want to strike, for we are going to combine business with pleasure. We want to do some hunting. My friend wants to see his inheritance and make a calculation as to what he will do with it."

The next day they took a train for a town some distance farther down, where they would be more likely to find a boat that would land them where they wanted to get off on the Kentucky side.

They met quite a number of Kentuckians on the train, wearing jeans, slouch hats and flannel shirts.

They made inquiry, and found several men who were

familiar with all that section of country around Miller's Landing.

CHAPTER II.

AT THE OLD TAVERN AT MILLER'S LANDING.

When the boat approached Miller's Landing Fred, Terry and Middleton were standing out on the deck, gazing at the surrounding country.

They recognized the old tavern at which they had stopped some four years before, but saw perhaps fifty other houses of all sizes and shapes that had been built up during their absence.

There were quite a number of people at the old dock, including a number of women and children.

When the boat rounded to and the gangplank was run out for the passengers to reach shore Fred, Terry and Middleton were the only ones who were to get off there.

As Terry ran ashore one of the young women exclaimed, seizing the arm of a friend standing alongside of her:

"Well, if that isn't Mr. Olcott I'm mistaken."

Terry, on hearing his name, turned and looked at her. She was the landlord's daughter.

The big, rosy-cheeked, buxom girl, as he caught her eye, smiled all over her face, and exclaimed:

"How do you do, Mr. Olcott?"

"Why, I'm doing the very best I can," and he rushed to her with extended hand and shook hers warmly. Then he pressed it to his lips, which caused her to blush furiously.

"You know I told you I'd come back some time to see you, and here I am. You recognize Mr. Fearnot, do you not?"

"Of course, and there he comes."

She extended her hand to him, and Fred took it and complimented her on her good looks, and hoped she was as well as she looked.

Then he introduced Middleton as a personal friend.

"We brought him out with us," said Fred, "to show him what you Kentucky girls look like."

It turned out that there were half a dozen girls on the river bank who remembered him and Terry, for the boys had danced twice at the old tavern while in the town before.

Terry looked at the strapping big landlord's daughter, and asked her:

"Say, are you still single?"

"Yes," she laughed, "but one of my sisters has married since you were here."

"How is that? Did she cut you out?"

"No. I wouldn't let a girl cut me out."

"Well, how is it that you are still single?"

"Because the right man hasn't come along yet. I'm not going to marry until I can get a man who is willing and able to take me out of these woods. Are you going to stop at the tavern?"

"Why, yes, if you are still living there!"

"Oh, yes! We are living there yet. But there's another tavern been opened on the other side of the street, about two or three hundred yards away from the river."

"Well, don't you let me stumble into that place. I've never forgotten the good fare and the good times we had when we stopped with your father."

"Then come on up to the house with us."

Each one carrying his satchel marched up to the house with the girls.

As they reached the piazza of the house Terry saw the landlord, whose face showed signs of touching the moonshine whisky quite often.

"Say, pop," called out the girl, "don't you remember this gentleman?"

The landlord was sitting in a chair smoking his corn-cob pipe.

He turned and looked keenly at Terry, then sprang to his feet, extended his hand and said:

"The Lord bless you! I'm glad to see you! But hanged if I can recollect your name!"

"Oh, pop," said the girl, "you haven't forgotten Mr. Olcott and Mr. Fearnot?"

"Great jimminy!" exclaimed the landlord. "No! No-body who knew them here can ever forget them," and he shook hands with Fred and Terry and then offered his hand to Middleton.

"He is a friend of ours, landlord," said Fred, introducing Middleton. "Now, have you got room for us in your house?"

"You bet I have! And we have plenty for you to eat, too, and all the good whisky that you want."

"Why, pop," called his daughter, "have you forgotten that neither of them drink?"

"No; but I guess they know more than they did when they were out here. Maybe they have learned to drink."

"Wrong again," said Fred. "So far as we are concerned you may as well lock up your barroom."

"All right," he laughed; "but let me tell you, you are the only men at this landing that don't drink."

"All right," said Terry. "I had to tackle two or three other men who did drink when I was here before, and you know what happened to them?"

"Yes, I do. They got licked."

"That's right. Probably they wouldn't have been licked if they hadn't been raised on moonshine whisky."

"Cut that short there, my friend," said the landlord. "We keep moonshine whisky, of course, but we've got some of the best old Monongahela to be found in all the West."

"Oh, you have, eh? That's just as bad. A man can get as drunk on old Monongahela as he can on moonshine whisky."

"Yes, but he won't have such a headache the next morning."

"Now come on and register," put in Beckie, and she led the way into the little office of the rough old tavern, and

some well-dressed traveling men, and others dressed in they registered their names.

"When you were here before," she said, "you and Mr. Olcott occupied one room."

"That's right. Give us the same room if you can." Then she asked if Middleton wanted a room to himself.

"Oh, yes. That will suit me very well," said the broker, "unless you have two beds in Fearnot's room."

"No; there is only one bed in the room, but your room is next to theirs."

Fred suspected that Beckie was practically the house-keeper, so he wondered if her mother was dead, and he asked her.

"She has been dead two years, Mr. Fearnot."

"Well, well, well! That's bad news. I really fell in love with the old lady when I was out here. She was as good a mother as I ever saw."

"Yes. She was a good mother, but she took sick two years ago, and after a week she died. I've had to run the house and look after everything ever since. Sister is married and is living away up in the mountains, twelve miles above here. Her husband is one of the foremen in the oil mill up there."

"Well, did she get a good man?"

"Yes, as good men go in Kentucky. She seems to be satisfied."

Just then a young girl about fifteen or sixteen came in, and Fred turned and looked at her.

"Say, Beckie," said he, "isn't that one of your younger sisters?"

"Yes," she replied. "That is Martha. She was a little twelve-year-old girl in short dresses when you were out here."

"Well, well, well! How she has grown. She is one of Kentucky's coming belles," and he extended his hand to her.

The girl was a modest little rosy-checked beauty, who shook hands with him and smiled.

He then introduced Middleton to her.

Then Terry grasped her hand, looked at her straight in the face for a couple of minutes, and then said:

"Pardon me, Martha, when I saw you before I didn't dream that you were going to grow up so beautiful."

The girl laughed, and Beckie said:

"Yes; she is considered the beauty at this landing, and she is a good girl, too. She is my right hand in house-keeping."

"How in the world have you kept some fellow from stealing her before this?" Terry asked her.

"Now, Mr. Olcott," said Beckie, "don't go to spoiling the girl."

"Haven't you just said she was a good girl? You can't spoil a good girl."

"No; but you can turn her head. You are a pretty boy yourself, and while you are here I am going to keep an eye on you."

Terry blushed in spite of himself.

Fred and Middleton slapped him on the shoulder, and said:

"Good! Good! Hit him again, Beckie!"

Pretty soon a lot of rough fellows came in, coming from the barroom, which connected with the front office through a side door.

A number of them remembered Fred and Terry.

One big fellow grasped Terry's hand, and sung out to the others:

"Boys, here is the chap that licked Bill Raggles some time ago."

They all laughed and shook hands with him.

Terry laughed and asked what had become of Bill.

"Oh, he got shot last year up in the mountains. Bill never could take good care of himself."

"Well, I'm sorry to hear of that. Kentucky is a mighty good place for a fellow to get wiped out before he is ready to go, isn't it?"

"You bet it is," said one of the newcomers. "A man in Kentucky, if he wants to live, must draw first, or he is put out of business."

Beckie was a good housekeeper. She attended strictly to business.

She turned to Fred and said:

"You know the way to your room. Show the other gentleman the one next to it, to the right. Our porter hasn't come in yet from the landing. Did you bring any trunks?"

"No; this is all we have. Each one carries his own outfit."

So Fred, Terry and Middleton picked up their satchels and rifles and went up to the second floor.

Beckie had given Terry the keys to the doors, and they took possession.

"Look here," said Middleton, "this beats anything I ever saw in my life. Isn't that younger girl a beauty?"

"Yes, she is. You'll find a lot of them just like her out here. The eldest daughter, who is the housekeeper, isn't an ugly girl, either. She is as strong as an ordinary man, can dance all night, and if the men get too drunk to keep order she will get a big club and drive them out. When she orders a man to go he goes, too, unless his legs go back on him."

It was about the middle of the afternoon when they landed there.

Up in their rooms they found water and towels and mirrors, so they freshened themselves up a little bit and then went downstairs to take a look at the locality.

They found a crowd of rough fellows drinking in the barroom, and the old man was acting as barkeeper, with a youth about nineteen or twenty as assistant.

When they came down every man in the barroom wanted them to drink with him, but of course they explained that they hadn't yet learned to drink whisky. But they decided to take each a glass of lemonade, which the assistant barkeeper made for them.

Middleton didn't mind taking a drink of whisky occa-

sionally, but Fred warned him up in the bedroom not to drink any whisky found at that place, and to be very careful not to get into a quarrel with any of the natives.

"For," said he, "every one of them carries a gun or a very dangerous knife. They don't know anything about fist and skull fight. Never contradict a man's word nor call him a liar, for he will draw and shoot you as quick as you can wink your eye."

So they drank their lemonade, while the whisky drinkers were actually laughing at them, and one of them asked Terry how "that blamed stuff" tasted.

"Try it," said Terry. "You can't drink enough of it to paint your nose."

Now, the fellow had a nose like a boiled lobster, and when Terry made that remark his friends laughed, and one of them remarked:

"That's why Joe won't drink it. He's very fond of that nose of his."

Joe smiled faintly, and asked:

"What's the matter with that nose?"

"That nose is all right," said Terry. "I'll bet on its being able to pilot you wherever you want to go in these mountains."

"You bet it will, and let me tell you it is what the storekeepers call 'a fast color.'"

"Yes, and I'm willing to bet that it is."

Joe had been drinking quite freely that day, and had enough whisky in him to start a fight on very small provocation.

He remarked that he could lick any man that didn't like his nose.

"So can I," remarked Terry, determined to humor him.

That seemed to please him, and then he asked Terry if he would have a glass of lemonade with him.

"Yes; I am very fond of lemons. When one changes his water there is nothing so good as to have lemon juice in it. Now, your water out here is different from what we have in New York. Lemon in water is like salt and pepper on beefsteak. It makes it taste all the better."

After drinking the second glass of lemonade Fred, Terry and Middleton left the barroom and went into the sitting-room, in the hope of seeing the girls again, but nobody was in there.

By and by, though, Beckie came in and sat down to entertain them, saying that she was really glad to see them, and hoped that they would stay longer than they did on their previous visit.

"Well, we expect to stay longer," said Fred. "My friend, Middleton, here, has fallen heir to a big tract of land up in the mountains, probably seventy-five miles from the river," and he named the county.

"Oh, my! That's a good ways off. I've never been there; but there are some very fine farms up in that region, I've heard. I have an uncle living up near there, and I'm expecting him down here any day in the week."

"Great Scott, Beckie! That's the best news I've heard since we landed here. We want to meet up with somebody

familiar with that part of the country, and would be glad to engage him as a guide."

"He often acts as a guide. He is a great hunter, too. He owns a good home."

"Now, tell me, Beckie, is he all right? Is he quarrelsome? Does he get drunk and want to shoot?"

"No, indeed!" she laughed. "You can trust Uncle Ben anywhere. He is a truthful man, too. I've never heard of his shooting but two men, and he killed both of them. He's not at all quarrelsome, and I never heard of his being drunk in his life; but I guess he could not hold enough whisky to make him drunk."

"Beckie, would you advise us to wait and engage him for a guide?"

"Yes; quicker than I would anyone here at the landing."

Middleton was just a bit squeamish over employing a man who had two dead men to his credit.

"Now, Beckie," said Terry, "send Martha in and let us have a talk with her."

"She is busy now, but after supper, when we have cleared away the dishes, she can come in, and two of our cousins will come in, too. They remember dancing with you and Mr. Fearnot four years ago. I sent word around to them, and probably some more girls may come in; so we will keep you away from those rough fellows who stay in the barroom."

"You don't like those rough fellows, do you?"

"No, I do not. One night when they were particularly noisy I went in there and told them not to make so much noise, but after I came out they commenced to make all the noise they could. I took a club and went in there and drove every one out, good and bad alike. Then I locked the door and put the key in my pocket and would not let pop have it. He got awful mad with me. Then they came through the front room and went inside the barroom, but they didn't make any more noise. I simply won't permit it."

"Oh, the old man himself is afraid of you, is he?" laughed Terry.

"Yes, when he sees I'm really mad he just gives up and says, 'Have it your own way,' and I do."

CHAPTER III.

MIDDLETON AND THE JEALOUS LOVER.

That evening Fred and Terry and Middleton spent in the sitting-room, talking to Beckie and her younger sister, and several young ladies came in, all relatives of the landlord's family.

Fred and Terry remembered having met all of them on their former visit.

Their arrival, of course, created quite a little excitement among the girls, for they remembered them as fine dancers, singers and musicians.

There were men in the barroom who sent in repeated requests for them to come out and shake hands with them, but they sent back word that they would see them the next day, as they couldn't think of leaving such pleasant company that evening.

Beckie herself suggested that they stay where they were; that all the men out in the barroom were drinking and merely wanted to talk to them about what happened during their first visit.

"Don't worry," laughed Terry. "We don't care a snap for those fellows. They merely want us to drink with them and tell stories. We are satisfied where we are."

They sat up till about eleven o'clock and then retired.

The young ladies who were visitors invited them to call and see them before they left Miller's Landing.

"We will if we can," said Fred. "We have got to go over the mountains to see some land that Mr. Middleton has had left to him by an uncle, and we are waiting for Uncle Ben to come in and pilot us out that way."

"Then don't wait till evening," said one of them. "Come over in the daytime, while you have nothing else to do."

"Thank you," said Terry, "but your mother might give us a left-handed blessing for interfering with your household work."

"Don't you believe that," laughed the young lady. "She is as fond of company as we are. Before I left home I heard her say that she hoped she would have a chance to see both of you before you went back East."

"That settles it," said Terry. "We will come over to see your mother. The fact is, I am very fond of the old girls, anyway."

The next morning when they went down to breakfast they were surprised to see that two of the girls had spent the night with Beckie and Martha.

They shook hands with them and passed a few compliments.

There were quite a number of men boarding at the tavern, and one of them gazed at Fred and his friends with a great frown on his face.

He sneered at them in an undertone to a friend that was sitting on the right, saying that they were all Yankees, who flattered themselves that the young ladies were just ready to throw themselves at their feet.

Terry happened to overhear a part of it, and after breakfast he asked Beckie who the young man was.

"Oh, that's Nick Webb. He is a clerk down at the boat office, and he is the most jealous-hearted young man I ever knew. He is dead in love with Martha, and she doesn't care the snap of her finger for him. He is getting a small salary down there, only about five dollars a week, but almost every day he brings Martha a few sticks of candy."

"Oh, he keeps her supplied with candy, eh?"

"Yes."

"And she smiles on him just enough to keep him in good humor, does he?"

"Yes," laughed Beckie.

"Well, how old is the young man?"

"I think he is about twenty-two."

"Well, if he is getting only five dollars a week, what in the world is he courting her for? They certainly can't live on that income, or else live very poorly, at least."

"Oh, that is considered pretty good pay. People are working for less than that up in the hills."

"All right, Miss Beckie," said Terry. "You look out and see that she doesn't fall in love with him, because her beauty ought to enable her to marry a rich man. He's a jealous-hearted fellow, and her beauty will attract attention, and he will kick and make trouble. A jealous husband is a great nuisance to any woman on earth."

"I think so, too," said the very sensible housekeeper. "If I had a jealous husband, and he wanted to make trouble just because I enjoyed myself in the company of friends I'd fire him out, and if he didn't go I'd take a club to him."

"Now, let me tell you something," Terry continued. "My friend Middleton thinks Martha is the most beautiful girl he ever saw in his life, and he is a single man, too, and has a most comfortable fortune. Give Martha the hint and tell her to act upon it."

"Why, Mr. Olcott, she isn't seventeen years old yet, and I don't want her to go to falling in love with anybody."

"That's all right. She will marry soon enough, anyway, but I would like to see her comfortably settled in life."

During the day Fred and Terry talked with the old landlord, who was quite anxious to know what had brought them out to Kentucky.

They told him, of course, about Middleton's inheritance, and what county he was in.

"Why, doggone my cats!" he exclaimed. "My brother Ben lives in that county, and I bet he knows all about that tract."

"Yes, Miss Beckie told us last night that her Uncle Ben lived out there, and she expected him down here just any day now; so she suggested that we wait till he come, and get him to act as guide for us."

"That's all right," said the old man. "You couldn't get a better man in all Kentucky to act as guide for you."

"Yes, that is what she says; and we are going to act upon her recommendation. But we don't want to have to wait here too long."

"There is no better place in this part of the state for you to stop," said the landlord, very proudly, "for we can take good care of you."

"That's so; we are not kicking on the fare or the accommodation at all. I noticed, though, that you had quite a rough crowd in last night."

"Yes, and quite a number of them remembered you and wanted you to come out and talk with them. I told them there were a lot of girls in the sitting-room, and young men were not expected to leave their company to spend an hour or two with rough fellows like them."

"That's right. Terry and I each have a sister, and

we are very fond of the society of ladies. Besides, we don't drink any intoxicants, at all."

"That's what I told them," said the landlord, "but for all that, they wanted to see and talk with you."

"Well, let them come around and see us in the day-time."

That day a couple of hunters came in from somewhere up in the mountains, bringing with them a fine young bear which they had shot that morning.

The landlord didn't care a snap for bear meat, but Fred and Terry concluded that they would buy it, if Beckie said that she'd have it served up.

She told them that she would have anything that they wished cooked.

So they bought the bear, and Middleton made a present of the pelt to Martha, telling her to have it properly cured and make a rug of it.

She was very proud of the gift, and thanked him heartily for it.

Beckie asked them if they wanted anything besides the bear hams cooked.

"No; that is the only part of a bear that we ever did eat. If you have any friends that would like to have the shoulders and the ribs just divide it among them."

"Well, here they eat every part of the bear, just as they would a pig."

"Then send it around to them. Just keep the hams, and give us steak every morning until it is all consumed. If anybody brings any deer let us know it."

"Well, there is some bear or deer that comes in every day, but pop doesn't like bear steak. He is very fond of venison, though."

During the day quite a number of men came in to see Fred and Terry.

One of them had acted as guide for them once on a hunt for bear; but they got only deer, and had to take a long walk over the mountains to get them.

Terry recognized him and greeted him very cordially.

"Say, pards," said the fellow, "are you down here for a hunting spree?"

"No, not exactly that. Our friend has a tract of three thousand acres of land, left him by an uncle who got tired of living, and we are going out to take a look at it."

"Where is it?"

Terry gave him the name of the county, and the old guide whistled.

"Well, if you are going to hoof it you will get pretty tired before you see that land. It is all of seventy-five miles back from the river."

"Yes, that is what I hear."

"And worse still," continued the guide, "they are the worst lot of people out in that part of the country that you can find in the whole region."

"Well, we won't have anything to do with them."

"No; but they will have something to do with you. They are suspicious of all strangers. They keep a sharp

lookout all the time for revenue agents, and if they can't find any they will start a fight on the smallest pretext."

"That's all right. If there is any man in Kentucky who can draw a gun quicker than we can, then he is welcome to try it."

"The trouble of it is that they will suspect your business in that part of the country and open fire on you from ambush. That is where they have the advantage of you."

"Well, we will have to take the chances on that. We have each brought a Winchester along."

That evening the boys found that Beckie, the landlord's daughter, had sent out invitations for about fifteen or twenty young people of both sexes to come in and have a quiet dance in the dining-room.

Three fiddlers came in, one of them a very good one, but the other two were the merest old-fashioned backwoods fellows, who could play but three or four tunes. They actually drowned those by banging the floor with their big feet.

Beckie remembered that Fred and Terry were splendid violinists, and she went to Fearnot and asked him if he wouldn't show them how to play.

"Well, I don't want to give any offense," said Fred.

"Oh, no danger of that. I told them that you were both good performers, and they ought to let you both play good tunes, to let them know how they should be played."

"All right," and Fred took one of the violins, and drew from it such music as none of them had ever heard before.

Of course the young man who was so infatuated with young Martha was on hand, being a boarder at the tavern.

He tried to engage Martha to dance with nobody but him, and said that he would dance every set with her.

She flatly refused, saying that she wouldn't treat the young gentlemen so rudely, as she met them some years ago, and they were very kind to her.

"Have any of them asked you to dance with them?"

"Yes, all three of them have asked, and I've promised them I would."

While she danced with Terry the young man's face was a study, and when she danced with Middleton there was a very savage expression on it.

As she danced with Fred he got up and left the room, and one of the other guests whispered to Terry that Martha's beau was nearly crazy at her dancing with him and his friends.

"Oh, that's the young man down at the steamboat office, is it?"

"Yes; he has just gone crazy about Martha."

"What is the matter with him? Is he afraid some of us will steal her?"

"Oh, he can't bear to see another fellow looking straight at her. He is so jealous he is a plumb fool."

"Well, if that's the sort of fellow he is she wants to keep him at a distance, for a jealous husband would ruin the life and spoil the happiness of the most even-tempered woman in the world."

"That's so," assented the young man, "but Nick can't help it. He was born so."

During the entire evening, while there were other pretty girls in the room, Middleton could see nobody but Martha.

He several times remarked that she was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen in his life, and some of the men in the room repeated it to Nick.

Beckie herself had told him that Mr. Middleton had made Martha present of a big bear skin, which she was going to have cured to use as a rug in her bedroom.

That nearly set them crazy.

When he saw Middleton dance with her a third time he went into the barroom and began filling up with moonshine whisky, and when Middleton went in with Terry to get a glass of cold lemonade the young fellow swaggered up to Middleton, and said:

"See here, mister, you've danced three times to-night with my girl, and I want to say to you that I want you to keep away from her."

Middleton looked at him, saw that his face was flushed, and that he was about half drunk.

"I haven't seen you dancing with her to-night," said Middleton, very coolly, "and I must say that if she is your girl you are treating her very shabbily. Instead of looking after her pleasure and giving her a good time you are out here filling up with whisky."

"That is none of your business, sir," said Nick.

"No, it isn't, but if she were a sister of mine I'd blow you full of holes if I saw you within ten feet of her."

"Blow me full of holes right now!" hissed Nick, reaching back to his hip pocket.

Middleton saw the motion, and as quick as an eye could wink he had him covered with his own revolver.

"Draw your gun!" said Middleton, with a coolness that sent the cold chills running up and down the fool's back.

"Nick," said the landlord, who was behind the bar, "don't make a fool of yourself. You had better go up to your room and get to bed, and drink no more whisk to-night."

"That's good advice," said Middleton, looking young Webb in the face, "and you would do well to follow it. I'm going back into the dining-room and ask Miss Martha for the pleasure of another dance with her."

"Say, if you'll dance with her again to-night I'll kill you!" hissed the desperate young fellow.

On hearing that the landlord walked around from behind the bar and took the revolver away from him, saying:

"You go on upstairs. If you make any trouble here to-night I'll break your neck for you." And he gave him a shove toward the foot of the stairs, and up he went without a word of protest.

He was just sober enough to know he mustn't offend the father of his sweetheart.

When Terry and Middleton returned to the dancing hall the former told Beckie young Webb had threatened to shoot his friend if he danced with Martha again.

"Did you ever see such a fool?" she asked.

"Well, he is not the only man whose head has been turned by a pretty girl. Is he in the habit of getting drunk?"

"Why, no. Was he drunk?"

"Yes, I think he was. His face was flushed, and your father had to take his revolver away from him and send him upstairs to bed."

"Well, I'll see that Martha has nothing more to do with him. She has been very pleasant to him because he is a regular boarder, but I think he came here to board just to be near her; but I never knew him to get drunk before. Did he have any words with Mr. Middleton?"

"Yes. He attempted to draw his gun on him, and Middleton got the drop on him and told him to draw up; but the young fellow seemed to be sober enough to see his danger. Middleton is a very quiet sort of man, but a very dangerous one to fool with. He belongs to a splendid New York family, which is quite wealthy."

From that moment Beekie herself became very attentive to the New Yorker, and Terry was in doubt whether or not she wasn't trying to capture him for herself.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BOYS MEET THE OLD GUIDE, "UNCLE BEN."

The next morning after the dance at the tavern the landlord's younger daughter, Martha, refused to take any notice of young Webb. She did wait on Fred, Terry and Middleton, though, and exchanged greetings with them, and every time she brought them a dish it was accompanied with smiles.

When Webb had finished his breakfast he waited to get a chance to speak to her before going down to his office.

He asked her what she meant by treating him in that sort of way.

"Well, instead of asking me questions, you had better be making some explanations," she said, angrily. "What right have you to threaten anybody for dancing with me? We are not engaged, and we are never going to be. Now, if you do anything of that kind again I'll see if I can't find a friend who will give you a first-class thrashing."

That broke the young man all up, because he had been considering himself practically engaged to her, for she had been receiving his attentions without protest; so he hurried to the office in no pleasant mood.

At noon when he came up to dinner he failed for the first time in months to bring her a package of candy, and Beekie laughingly told Fred about it.

He, of course, conveyed the information to Middleton.

Terry joked the girl about it, and she said that she didn't care anything about his candy, although she was very fond of anything sweet.

"Don't worry, Martha," said Terry, in great good humor.

"I guess we can keep you supplied with candy."

"Thank you; that's kind of you."

Terry and Middleton held a consultation, and learned that there were three stores at the landing, every one of which had candy for sale.

"Now, Terry, you go down to the store where that young Webb clerks and buy every pound of candy they have on hand. I'll go to the other two and do the same thing, and have them sent up here to her address."

"Great Scott! You'll create a famine here among the candy-eaters," remarked Terry.

"Well, we pay tribute to the girl's beauty by so doing."

Before night pretty Martha had fifty pounds of candy in the house, and her eyes fairly danced with delight as she looked at the prize.

Terry gave it out that it was Middleton's present, for the broker had given him the money to make the purchase that he did.

Other girls who went to the stores to buy candy were told that there wasn't a stick of it left in either of the stores, as the gentlemen from New York had bought them out and had the candy sent up to Martha at the tavern."

Some of the girls went up to the tavern to see her and find out if the story was true.

"I guess it is," she laughed, "for I've got fully fifty pounds in my room. He is certainly the most generous man I ever saw."

"Oh my, Martha! Why don't you catch him?"

"How can I? I can't go to him and ask him to have me."

"Well, just let him know that you are willing to have him, and maybe he will ask you."

Of course everybody about the landing knew all about the candy incident, and they began teasing young Webb about letting the stranger come in and take his girl away from him.

They made life a burden to him.

He suggested to his employer that he order another lot of candy, as there was none at the landing, but the employer had been suspecting him of taking the candy without charging it to himself; so he was rather slow about ordering a new supply.

During that day Uncle Ben reached the landing to attend to some little business.

He brought with him quite a number of bear and deer pelts, several coon skins, and half a dozen wildcat pelts.

He came on horseback, and when he stopped in front of the tavern his acquaintances gathered around him. Fred and Terry and Middleton actually laughed outright at the odd sight he presented riding with the pelts packed before and behind him.

Martha and Beekie ran out and hugged and kissed the rough old fellow, calling him dear Uncle Ben, and showed that he was quite popular with them.

"Boys," said Fred, "that's Uncle Ben. How do you like his looks?"

"He is a rather rough looking chap," said Middleton.

"Yes, but I guess he is all right," added Terry. "He has only two dead men to his credit, showing that he is not a very dangerous chap."

Uncle Ben shook hands with the landlord, who was his brother, and the latter set out a bottle of whisky and a glass for him.

He took a pretty good swallow of the contents of the bottle, and then turned to talk with quite a party of acquaintances who had followed him into the barroom.

Martha came running in to where Fred, Terry and Middleton were quietly conversing, and exclaimed:

"Uncle Ben has come."

A half hour later Beckie came in with the old man and introduced him, saying Mr. Fearnot and Mr. Olcott were personal friends of hers, and that Mr. Middleton was their friend, who had come out with them to look up the Middleton tract up in his county.

Uncle Ben looked at Middleton and extended his big, horny hand to him, saying:

"Glad to know you, sir. I hear that your uncle is dead."

"Yes, he has been dead several months; and in his will he left me a tract of three thousand acres up in your county."

"Yes, I know the tract well. It's a wild wilderness, filled with some of the finest timber in the state; when it is cleared some of it will be really rich land. There are a few squatters about on it, and I believe there are a few stills scattered around in the gulches."

"They make moonshine whisky up there, eh?"

"Yes; that is what they call it."

"Well, how did they happen to settle on land that does not belong to them?"

"Oh, a man will run a still anywhere where he can find vacant land in the mountains. Your uncle didn't care a snap about it, for they sent him a barrel of moonshine whisky once a year, and I suppose he took it in the way of rent."

"Well, I don't want to take any rent for it that way. I want to take a look at it," said Middleton, "and see if it is worth anything. If so, I'd like to sell it."

"Well, land ain't worth much up in that part of the state," said Uncle Ben. "We have much more land there than we have people. If there was a railroad anywhere near by, that tract would be worth a fortune, for you could cut the timber off and ship it to market."

"Well, what do you think it is worth just as it stands?"

"That's hard to say, pard. All people care for up there is the privilege of hunting, and as you can't take the land away, they'll hunt over it whether you like it or not. If you try to stop them they would about as soon shoot you as a wildcat."

"That's tough," said Middleton. "We have come out to look at the land. What will you charge us to act as guide for us? Your niece, Beckie, has recommended you,

and my two friends, Fearnot and Olcott, believe that anything she says is as true as gospel."

"Every time," put in Terry.

"Oh, yes! Beckie is all right," said Uncle Ben, "and what she says here at this landing goes with everybody. Now, if you'll just put up a dollar a day I'll show you, not only every part of that county, but half the state."

"That's cheap enough. I've been up in the mountains of New York and had to pay two dollars and a half a day for a guide. What time are you going to return home?"

"Oh, I don't know. I'll stay around here a day or two longer."

"Well, are you on horseback?" Uncle Ben continued.

"No, we are on footback."

"Well, that is pretty tough traveling, mister."

"Yes, but how the deuce could we take care of the horses away up in the mountains, where there is no provender for them?"

"Oh, we don't want to be bothered with horses," said Terry, "unless we have somebody to take care of them."

"That's right, young man; but can you stand the tramp?"

"Don't worry about that," said Terry. "I can go you forty miles a day on foot without sweating a drop."

"Maybe you've never traveled in the mountains of Kentucky?"

"Yes, I have, and I've traveled among great deal larger mountains, too. I've been out in the Rockies. If you can keep up with us, you may consider yourself a pretty tough old chap."

"Don't you worry about me," chuckled the old fellow. "I can walk two miles to your one."

"Don't go to fooling yourself," laughed Terry. "My name isn't Walker, nor have I any relatives by that name; yet I'll walk with any man in this state and carry a rifle on my shoulder, a blanket strapped to my back, and also carry a frying pan and a coffee pot."

"All right, then. Did you ever get lost in the woods?"

"No, but my pard here did once out in Arizona, and he had to kill and eat a catamount to keep from starving."

"What! Eat a catamount?"

"Yes," said Terry. "Generally he is very careful about what he eats. But have you ever been so hungry that you have been tempted to cut a slice out of your leg and eat it?"

"Yes, but I never had to do that. There is plenty of game up in the mountains. I've had a deer to leap my fence to get into my barn lot, and it left its pelt there with me. I've got five children, three boys and two girls, and all of them but the two youngest can take my old rifle and bring down a squirrel from the top of the highest tree."

"Well, I hope you will keep that gun out of their reach while we are around," said Middleton.

"Oh, they know the difference in varmints. But if the men in the settlement got the idea into their heads

that you were a revenueur they might take a crack at you. We got some pretty tough characters up there; but they never bother a man who is with me."

"Well, that is why we want you for a guide, so you will be a protection to us. And I presume all those people up there know the landlord here."

"Yes, everybody up there knows him."

"Well, hadn't we better get a certificate from him, certifying that we are not revenue people?"

"No; you'll never be bothered as long as you are with me."

"Well, but suppose we should wander off some time in search of game. What would prevent them from taking a crack at us?"

"Oh, they'll find out all about you before you've been up there three days. Anybody that stops with me is all right."

Fred, Terry and Middleton took quite a fancy to the tough old fellow. He was quite an amiable old man, judging from the way he talked, but his appearance was against him. He looked as though he might be a moonshiner himself, and a rather dangerous one at that."

An hour later he was questioning Beckie about them.

She told them that they had stopped there for a week four years previous, and that they built the oil mill up on the first mountain.

"Oh, they are the chaps, eh? Do they know that that mill never paid expenses?"

"Yes, I think they do. But Fearnot thinks that was on account of bad management, and that's what I think, too. But, uncle, do they call them oil mills up there, or simply oil wells?"

"Oh, no matter about that! Every man calls 'em what he pleases. Some call them oil wells and some oil mills. No matter what they call it, it's just the same thing. But look here, Beck, it seems to me I heard of one of them young men bein' a great fighter. Which one is it?"

"Oh, you mean the one who licked Bill Raggles?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's the one who was sitting over there by the window when you were talking to them. His name is Oleott. He is a rich young man, in fact all of them are. He has hunted nearly all over the United States, and both of them have fought in Mexico. I heard them talking about it when they were here four years ago."

"Well, have they got any money with them? That fellow Middleton has offered me a dollar a day to guide 'em."

"I really don't know. But I'm sure they have all they need for their purpose. They came out here to look at the inheritance Mr. Middleton got from his uncle, and I'm sure they have money enough to pay their way. But, uncle, you must tell your friends up there that they are as quick as lightning on the shoot."

"Oh, I heard of 'em up at the oil wells. They licked a number of fellows up there when they were boring for them wells."

The old man said he would wait there two or three days

to let his horse rest, while he looked around among his friends. And Fred, Terry and Middleton were so informed.

"That's all right," said Middleton. "We will wait till you are ready to go back. We are in no particular hurry. We want to take our time, and whenever we see a chance for big game, why, to do a little hunting on the way."

The old man said that he wasn't in any hurry, either; that he would stop as often as they wanted him to, and they could do all the hunting they pleased.

Another dance was held at the tavern the night before they were to start over the mountains with Uncle Ben.

There were more girls present that night than at the first dance, and some of them, of course, showed decided preference for one or the other of the New Yorkers.

They all talked about the man who had bought fifty pounds of candy for Martha.

One buxom, rosy-cheeked girl of twenty remarked in Middleton's hearing that she wished she was able to mash fifty pounds of candy out of somebody.

Middleton laughed, and suggested that she mash Oleott, as he was one of the most liberal men he ever met with.

"Oh, I'm afraid of him!" she laughed. "He is the gentleman who thrashed Bill Raggles."

"Well, you don't want to pick a fight with him," he remarked. "I thought that these Kentucky girls admired men who were good fighters."

That night Middleton danced four sets with pretty Martha.

Young Webb was not present, but several of the girls undertook to tease Martha by saying:

"Martha, I'll tell Nick on you."

"Do so, please. Nick is out for good."

"Well, when this gentleman leaves where will you get more candy?"

"I don't want any more. I've got as much as I can eat during a whole year."

Martha, though, was very generous to her girl friends, as she distributed fully ten pounds of candy among them.

The next morning a little after sunrise the party prepared to start on the march over the mountains.

There were, of course, a crowd of men, and nearly all the girls in town assembled to see them off.

Middleton watched his opportunity to take Martha aside and have a little talk with her.

"Look here, Martha," he half whispered, "I want a promise of you before I leave."

"What is it?" she asked.

"Promise me that you won't engage yourself to anybody before I come back."

She blushed rosy, and said:

"All right. I'll promise you that. But how long are you going to be gone?"

"Hanged if I know. We may be a month. You don't want to marry before that time, do you?"

"No, indeed," she laughed.

"Well, I want you to keep me in your mind, for I may

have to ask another question when I come back this way."

Then he shook hands with her, saying:

"Good-by, sweetheart!"

Then he joined Fred, Terry and the old guide.

He left her in a tremendous state of excitement, for she frankly construed his words as meaning love and matrimony. Her little heart was in a great flutter.

CHAPTER V.

THE BOYS MEET MOONSHINERS.

The crowd of residents at Miller's Landing gave the boys a good send-off as they started up the mountain road.

They whooped and yelled, and wished them all sorts of good luck.

The girls waved their handkerchiefs. Some waved their hats.

They started off with a stride that made Uncle Ben's eyes bulge.

His horse was a very slow walker, and before they had gone a mile he was fully two hundred yards behind, and he was urging his horse vigorously with his spurs.

"Boys, let's sit down and wait for the guide," suggested Fred, and they sat down by the roadside.

When he came up Terry suggested to him to "throw away" the horse.

"Well, let me tell you about this horse," said he. "He is slow, but he has wonderful staying powers. He can keep up this walk six days in the week."

"So can a snail," laughed Terry.

"Well, don't you go to making fun of my horse. When it comes to plowing he can keep up the same gait, and has never been known to fail me. Out on the farm in these mountains a good steady horse is one of the best things on the place."

"That's right," said Fred. "A good steady horse is an invaluable requisite to good farming."

"Yes, it is," said Uncle Ben, "and he can live on anything. He never fights about what he eats. If he can't get corn he can eat acorns like a hog."

"What's that?" said Fred.

"It's a fact," said he. "Now let me show you." And the old man went under a tree by the side of the road and gathered a handful of acorns, and the horse ate them greedily.

"Will he chew tobacco?"

"I never tried him. All the tobacco I ever got hold of I chew myself," and he reached in his pocket and pulled out a twist of Kentucky tobacco and bit off a chew.

"Let the horse have a chew," Terry suggested, and the old man held it to the horse, who gave a sniff at it, but refused to touch it.

"Oh, he is a good friend to his boss," laughed the old man. "He won't take any rations away from me. Don't any of you fellows chew?"

"No; we are all sensible like the horse."

"And you don't drink whisky, either?"

"Nope," and Terry shook his head.

"Well, you are a sorry crowd," chuckled the old man.

"Well, you will admit we can outwalk the horse, don't you?"

"Well, he is no racer."

"You get down and try to keep up with us yourself, and probably we will find out whether or not you are a racer."

"No; I'm like the horse, rather slow, but steady. I can keep up a steady walk from sunrise till sunset."

"So can I," said Terry, "and not only from sunrise to sunset, but from 'moonrise' until the next sunset."

"You can blow pretty well."

"Yes, but don't you bother about our wind. You may think we are tenderfeet. I don't know but that Middleton is, but you'll lose money if you bet he can't keep up with you."

Middleton was a pretty strong man, strong limbs, good-natured, and never complained of the tramp up the mountains.

He did remark, though, about noon, that it was evident that the mountain was all up hill.

"Well, what did you expect up here?" Fred asked. "A hole in the ground?"

"No; but I did expect to see a hole now and then."

He stopped to drink water at every spring or stream they passed.

By noon they had reached the old oil well, where Fred and Terry had spent nearly a month four years previous.

There were a few men working around there yet, and they were satisfied with a very small profit on their labor.

They were still working the pump and shipping a few barrels of oil down to the landing.

There were three or four men who remembered Fred and Terry.

They shook hands with them, and had nearly a hundred questions to ask.

There was one of them who had a grudge against Terry, and, being armed, he wanted to pick a quarrel with him, but Uncle Ben told him if he wanted to fight to tackle him; that he was the guide for the party, and was under obligations to see them through safe and sound.

Uncle Ben was a pretty tough old chap, which every man well knew.

Terry suggested to the old guide that he let him tackle the fellow, but the fellow wouldn't fight except with fire-arms.

Uncle Ben told him if he drew his gun he would shoot him.

So he started off, with the others following him.

A couple of miles farther they stopped at a spring, where they built a fire and prepared a good lunch.

After stopping there for an hour they resumed the tramp.

A few miles farther on Fred and Terry saw a black bear crossing the road a hundred yards ahead of them, and they gave chase to him.

The bear was evidently making for his den, but they crowded in too close, and he had to take to another tree.

Fred, though, was too quick for him. He got hold of his hind feet and pulled him down.

The bear then turned with his back to the tree to put up a fight.

Middleton and the old man came up, and both were dumfounded at seeing them having fun with the bear.

The old guide sung out:

"Why in tarnation don't you shoot that b'ar?"

"Oh, we want to have some fun with him."

"Well, the first thing you know he'll be havin' some fun with you fellows. I know all about b'ars."

Fred took up a little stick with a split end and got behind the tree and twisted the end of it in the bear's fur.

Bruin couldn't stand that. He wheeled around with a growl and reached around the tree with both arms.

That was what Fred was after. He caught hold of the bear's fore paws and had him a prisoner. He couldn't climb the tree nor pull loose from Fred's terrible grip.

"Now, Terry, let's have a little fun with him."

Terry went up to him, pulled his ears, cuffed him, and pulled his fur.

Bruin tried hard to get loose.

Middleton and the old guide stood off looking on, with their rifles ready for use if bruin should get loose and charge them.

The comments of the old guide on the "foolishness of them boys" caused Fred and Terry to laugh immoderately.

Terry twisted a stick in the bear's fur and pulled it until he squealed like a pig under a gate.

He couldn't strike with his hind feet, nor could he get his forepaws loose from Fred's grip.

Terry stood behind him and several times cuffed his ears with his fist.

The old guide gave voice to some expressions they had never heard before in their lives. They were peculiar to Kentucky.

Never was a bear more anxious to get away from his enemies.

Middleton had nothing to say. He was astonished at Fred's and Terry's familiarity with the brute.

Finally, when they were through having fun with bruin, Fred invited Middleton to come up and kill his first bear.

"Just place your revolver within a foot of the bear's head and pull the trigger. Then you can say to your friends when you go home that you killed a bear with your pocket pistol."

Middleton did as he suggested, and when he fired his

revolver the bear struggled for a few moments, and Fred let go of him.

He rolled over on the ground, growling and scratching, and it took about fifteen minutes to give up the ghost.

Fred and Terry proceeded to cut off the hams, and left the balance of the carcass there in the woods.

The guide had nothing to say about their way of killing a bear until they stopped to camp for the night.

They built a big fire, cut slices of bear steak from one of the hams, and then proceeded to broil them over the coals.

The old man had been living for forty years up in the mountains, and of course had killed wolves, bears and wildcats without end. When they made a pot of coffee the old man was astonished when he tasted the delicious beverage, and found it as clear as brandy.

"Say, old man," said Middleton, "what these boys don't know about life in the woods isn't worth knowing."

The old man loaded his pipe, and sat near the fire smoking and thinking.

Finally Fred and Terry began telling stories.

The old man listened, and instead of laughing he merely gave an occasional grunt.

Finally Terry got off a yarn, at which the old man dropped his pipe and began fairly bellowing, so convulsed with laughter was he.

Terry sprang up, picked up the old man's pipe and held it for him, and looking at him as seriously as an undertaker, asked him what was hurting him.

He kept up his uproarious laughter for nearly ten minutes.

Then Terry suggested that he take a few puffs at his pipe, and it would cure him.

He took it between his teeth, but had to hold it in his hand, for occasionally his mouth would fly open, and he would begin bellowing again.

He knocked the ashes out of his pipe and began raking up leaves to make a bed.

Fred and Terry and Middleton spread down their Mexican blankets, and they all laid down with their feet to the fire.

Fred offered the old man half his blanket, but he said:

"No; I don't want no blanket."

"Well, you don't want the dew to fall on you, do you?"

"Dew, snow or rain, it makes no difference to me," and soon he was asleep.

He snored and snorted, and occasionally would wake up and indulge in a fit of laughing.

"By George," said Fred, "I've been up against such sleepers before, and we won't get any sleep to-night until we are just overpowered by drowsiness. There is no animal in the woods that will attack a man when asleep if he makes such a noise as that in his nose. An old guide told us out in the Maine woods that no animal would tackle a man who snored and snorted in his sleep; that it was better protection than the best dog."

"I wouldn't wonder," said Middleton: "but it is rather hard on us."

"Yes; but we will have to get used to it."

"Say, boys, let's see what effect a wolf fight will have on him," and with that he began imitating the fighting of a couple of wolves, using his best ventriloquial powers to make the noise.

Suddenly the old man awoke, sat up, looked all around, and seized his rifle.

The fight went on for nearly ten minutes, and apparently within fifteen feet of the camp.

Then he got up, holding his rifle ready for instant use, and stirred up the fire to raise a blaze. Then he searched all around for the fighting varmints.

Then he called to the others, and wanted to know:

"Where the traneation blazes are them wolves?"

"Oh, they are just chawing each other up," said Terry. "Let them alone, and we'll find what is left of them in the morning."

"Well, how are you going to sleep if they fight all night?"

"Oh, you can sleep as well as we can under your snoring."

"Say, does my snoring disturb you chaps?"

"Of course it does! I'd rather hear forty wolves fighting than to listen to you snorting in your sleep."

The old man chuckled and still kept up his search for the fighting wolves."

Finally one of them gave a whine and made a break through the woods with the other in pursuit, and gradually the sounds of the combat died away in the distance.

The old man made a few pertinent comments and laid down on the ground again, but he couldn't sleep; so he sat up, loaded his old corn-cob pipe and began smoking.

When he finished the pipe he laid down again, stuck his feet almost in the ashes of the campfire, and in a little while began snoring and snorting again.

"Great Scott! He is on the trail of those wolves now!" laughed Terry.

"Yes, and we've got to stand it until he catches them."

Long after midnight, though, Fred, Terry and Middleton dozed off and slept well until sunrise.

When they awoke they found Uncle Ben looking around for wolf tracks.

He couldn't find a leaf disturbed.

He said to himself:

"Well, I must have been dreaming," and he began piling up old dead wood on the campfire.

Again they had bear steak and coffee, after which they started off on the journey again.

Along in the middle of the day they met three men, whom Fred and Terry instantly sized up as being moonshiners.

They greeted the guide familiarly and asked who his friends were.

He told them they were friends from New York, and they were going to look at the Middleton tract of land, and he pointed to Middleton, saying:

"That gentleman has been left that property by old Job Middleton, who was his uncle."

"Do you know 'em personally?" one of the moonshiners asked.

"Never met 'em till I went down to the landing, but my brother and his girls know 'em, for they were out there four years ago. They are all right, and I am responsible for 'em."

"That's all right, then," said the spokesman of the party. Then he looked at Fred, and added:

"We are very careful about strangers coming out into them mountains."

"Yes, I understand that," said Fred, "but we have nothing to do with the revenue department."

"All right, then. Would you like a pull at some good old mountain dew?"

"Thank you. We never drink anything that can intoxicate."

"Thunder and lightning. You never drink any whisky at all?"

"No, sir. None of us drink it, nor do we smoke or chew."

The three moonshiners looked at them as though they had run up against the greatest curiosity it had ever been their good fortune to meet.

"What do you live on?" one of them asked.

"Anything that is good to eat. We live on beef steak, venison and bacon."

"They make the best coffee in the world," put in the guide.

"But they don't drink any whisky?" said one of the others.

"No, and that is the strangest thing I ever knew."

Then the old man proceeded to tell them how they captured a bear the afternoon of the day before.

"You wouldn't believe it, boys, but shoot me for a wild-cat if they didn't catch him by the hind legs, pull him down the tree, and one of them held his fore paws hard and fast while the other had fun with him, pulling his ears and twisting his fur until he squealed like a pig with a dog holding his ear."

"Ben, have you been drinking anything much this morning?" one asked.

"Haven't had a drop."

"Then you had better take something quick, for there's something wrong with you."

CHAPTER VI.

OUT IN THE KENTUCKY MOUNTAIN WILDS.

Fred, Terry and Middleton laughed heartily at the moonshiner's remark.

Uncle Ben smiled, too, and then in very vigorous language swore to the truth of the statement.

The moonshiners turned to Fred and asked him if the old man was telling the truth.

"Why, yes!" said Fred. "Every word of it is true. The black bear is not half as dangerous as people think he is."

"Oh, you can't tell me nothin' about black b'ars," said the moonshiner. "I've killed many a one, an' know enough about 'em not to lay hands on 'em while they are alive."

"Well, it depends a great deal upon what sort of hands are laid upon him. Now just shake hands with me, and squeeze my hand as hard as you please, and I'll squeeze yours; then you'll understand how I was able to hold the bear when I got a grip on his fore paws."

The mountaineer had a rough hand and was a strong looking fellow, too, but when Fred put on the pressure he rose on his toes and gasped out:

"Ouch! Stop, for heaven's sake!"

Fred released his grip on him, and the fellow looked at his hand and said several things in very choice Kentucky lingo.

The old guide leaped off his horse and extended his hand to Fred, saying:

"Gimme a taste of that grip."

Fred did so, and found the old fellow had a hard grip himself, but he yelled "Leggo!" after which he examined his hand and worked his fingers to see that none of them had been broken.

"Well, I don't blame the b'ar," said he. "Mister, how did you git such a grip as that?"

"Why, that is the teetotalist's grip. I never drank any whisky in my life. I can lick any black bear in these mountains in a square, up and down fist and skull fight."

"Well, what would you do if he got the hug on you?"

"I can squeeze harder than he can," said Fred.

One of the mountaineers explained that he'd be everlastingly squashed if he believed it.

And another one said:

"You say you never drink any whisky?"

"Never touch a drop," said Fred. "It stimulates a fellow for a few minutes, and then he becomes weak. Sometimes they can't stand up or walk, and yet they feel as if they could lick all creation."

When the old man suggested it was time for them to go on their trip he sprang upon his horse and started off.

The three mountaineers went along with them, talking with Fred, Terry and Middleton. The questions they asked would have put a Yankee schoolmaster to flight, but they answered every question good-naturedly, and several times denied that they had any connection whatever with the revenue department.

Middleton showed them the letter from the Kentucky lawyer, telling about the three thousand acre tract left him by his uncle.

"Read that," said he, "and you certainly ought to be satisfied that we have nothing to do with moonshiners."

It happened that neither of the three could read a word of writing, but they looked at it and said, as they handed it back:

"I guess it is all right, mister."

"Look here," said Uncle Ben, "I see you still doubt my word about my friends being all right. Now, you don't want to do that again. I say they are all right, and when I say it I mean it; so you had better tell the boys that they are to be left alone. They are going to stop at my house until they have seen all they want to see of the Middleton tract. If anybody doubts my word, let 'em come around to my place and let me hear what they have to say."

They knew that old Ben was a fighter from away back, and that he didn't hesitate to shoot when he thought it was time for him to do so.

Fred and Terry learned, in talking with the mountaineers, that revenue officers had passed through that part of the country only a week before, and that one of them had been so badly wounded that his companions had to take him out of the country, and that two moonshiners had been killed by them.

So they were very suspicious of all strangers, and were ready to shoot, even without investigation.

Our party tramped hard all the rest of the day, and when the sun went down they stopped near a small branch of clear running water and made a campfire.

The three mountaineers stuck to them, and the way they ate beefsteak and drank coffee made the boys believe that their rations would soon give out if they kept steadily with them.

Finally Terry hinted as much to the old guide.

He shook his head, though, and said it was all right: that it wouldn't do to interfere with them.

"Well, it won't do for us to take them along with us and feed them."

"Oh, you can't stop them from going just where they please."

The mountaineers, though, insisted on building the fire and doing other camp work, and said nothing whatever to give offense.

They laid down around the fire to sleep just as the old guide did, and each one of them seemed to vie with the other in snoring.

"By George," said Fred, "it has always been a puzzle to me why men who live in the woods always snore. I don't think I ever met a woodsman in my life who didn't snore and snort in his sleep. Hang them, if they don't let us sleep I'll see to it that they don't." And using his ventriloquial powers he once more set a couple of wolves to fighting, apparently almost on top of them.

The mountaineers sprang up and seized their rifles, but were puzzled to know what had become of the varmints.

"The same thing happened last night," said Terry. "They were called up by Uncle Ben's snoring and snorting in his sleep, and if you fellows don't quit it you will call up all the wolves in the county. It makes them mad when they come up and find it is men making such outrageous noises."

"Say," said one of the mountaineers, "you don't like my snoring?"

"No; I don't like anybody's snoring, unless I am a mile or so off from it."

"Well, you'd better take yourself off for a mile or two. I'm not responsible for what I do in my sleep, and if you don't like it you had better skip out. This is a free country, and when a man wants to sleep he has got the right to do it."

"I agree with you there," said Terry. "A man is privileged to do as he pleases, as long as he don't interfere with anybody else. You have the right to sleep, but when your sleep disturbs mine, I think it is up to you to stop it, or sleep somewhere else."

The mountaineer was somewhat surprised at his bold words, but he was a fearless sort of fellow, and asked Terry what he was going to do about it.

"I don't know. It depends upon what you do. If your snoring calls up all the wolves in the woods you will spoil your own sleep as well as ours; so if you want to do that I have nothing more to say."

That shut the fellow up, and he laid down upon the ground with his rough boots almost in the ashes of the campfire.

As soon as they began snoring Fred called up the wolves again, and this time he had a pair of wildcats, and they raised a regular circus.

The mountaineers sprang up, seized their revolvers, and swore vengeance on the pesky varmints.

Of course they couldn't find any beasts about, and that aroused their superstitious fears.

They couldn't understand it; so they decided to sit up and see what they could see.

That gave Fred, Terry and Middleton a chance to snatch an hour or two of sleep.

Of course the rough fellows had never heard of ventriloquism in their lives.

They asked old Ben what he thought about it.

The old fellow shook his head in a way that plainly said:

"Shoot me if I know!"

After eating a hearty breakfast the next morning the three mountaineers left them.

They plunged into the woods and disappeared entirely from sight.

"Where have they gone, Uncle Ben?" Fred asked.

"Hanged if I know! But they are just as much at home in the woods as they are in their cabins. It don't make no difference to them where they sleep. They can get all the game to eat that they need."

"Look here, Uncle Ben, can you tell me why it is that all woodsmen snore in their sleep?"

"No, I can't!"

"Well, I'd give something to understand it. You are about as bad at it as any man I ever saw, and last night the four of you actually beat a circus band. Hanged if all you fellows out here in these mountains don't make more

noise when you are asleep than when you are wideawake and actually fighting, no matter how drunk you may be."

The old guide chuckled.

Along in the afternoon he stopped, and said:

"Now we are on the northwest corner of the Middleton tract of land."

Middleton became deeply interested.

He found that he was in the midst of a great mountain range, but immense timber seemed to cover every acre in sight.

In some places there were little valleys, which the old man said was very rich land when under cultivation.

"How far does it run in that direction?" asked Middleton, and he pointed ahead.

"Oh, I reckon it runs three or four miles, mister. Three thousand acres is a big piece of land, let me tell you."

"Tell me, is any of that land cultivated anywhere?"

"No; there's a number of cabins on it, but the settlers live on game altogether."

"Don't they raise any vegetables or any grain to make bread of?"

The old man shook his head, and said that they bought corn over in the next county, where there were a great many farms.

"Where do you live?" Terry asked.

"About a mile further on, just below the line of the Middleton tract. Right out on the left here is a big spring, one of the biggest in this county, and the water is almost like ice."

"Which way does the water run?"

"Oh, it goes down into this hollow about a quarter of a mile to the left, and then runs off in the direction of the river."

"Well, what is the matter with us going down there and taking a look at it while we are so near?"

"Mister, I guess we had better look at it some other time, for there are some pretty tough neighbors down that way, and all of 'em carry guns."

"Well, you know them all, don't you?" Terry asked.

"Oh, yes; but maybe some of them would make trouble just because you are strangers."

"Say, Uncle Ben," called Fred, "there are some stills around in this hollow, aren't there?"

The old man nodded his head affirmatively.

"I thought so," said Fred; "so we won't bother any of them."

"Then come on home with me," and the old man started up another hill.

He saw a big buck fully three or four hundred yards ahead, standing in the middle of the road and looking at them.

He stopped and called Fred's attention to it, saying:

"Now, mister, one of you get out into the woods on either side of the road and maybe you'll get a shot at it."

"What's the use of it?" Fred said. "I can get him where he stands."

"Too far off, mister! Too far off!"

Fred raised his rifle, took quick aim and fired.

The buck jumped into the air and then fell in his tracks, apparently stone dead.

The old guide uttered exclamations of surprise.

He was about to put spurs to his horse to go up to where the dead buck lay, when suddenly a couple of wolves appeared in the road, apparently to feast on the carcass.

Quick as a flash Terry raised his rifle and fired, and over one of the wolves tumbled.

The other one looked in the direction whence the shot came, and the next moment Fred gave him a bullet and down he went.

The old guide swore that he had never seen such shooting before in all his life.

"Say, Uncle Ben," said Fred, "don't you know that a bullet will go just where it is aimed?"

"Yes, but I never saw such long range shots as those. There lies a dead buck and two dead wolves, at least four or five hundred yards away."

"Well, that is the way we aim. Terry and I never miss when we fire, for there is no sense in it."

They went on up the hill till they reached the place where the buck and the wolves were lying.

One of the wolves was yet alive, and he showed his white fangs, but his back was broken and he could only rise up on his forefeet.

The deer was stone dead.

Middleton settled the wounded wolf's fate with a shot from his revolver.

"Now, gentlemen," said the old guide, "we don't throw away no venison out in this part of the country, nor pelts, either. Let's stop and get all that meat."

"All right; go ahead," and Fred and Terry assisted him.

He got the wolves' pelts, but simply threw the buck over his horse's back, after opening the carcass and throwing away the entrails.

He would take off the pelt at the house.

A mile farther on they came in sight of the old man's home.

It was a row of three log cabins.

There were five or six children out in the yard, who set up a shout when they saw "dad" coming. Among them was a girl about sixteen years old, who headed the troop of children, but recoiled when she saw the three strangers.

She went into the house, and her mother came out.

The old man kissed every one of the little ones; had a pet name for each one, and then said that the three men who were with him were good men, and all friends of his.

The mother of the children was a very good looking woman, but was apparently quite negligent about her attire. Her hair was twisted in a roll, hanging down her back.

"Ben," said she, "who's them men you've got there with you?"

"Friends of mine, Maggie."

"Say, Ben, are they revenueurs?"

"Not on your life, old girl. They are business men from New York. One of the men owns the Middleton tract, which old Job Middleton left him when he died, and he came out here to look at it, and will stay here with us a few days. Here is a fine buck that one of them shot. So you see we'll have plenty of meat for 'em."

She came out to look at the buck, and the old man took it off the horse, and Fred and Terry advanced and offered their hands.

She shook hands with them rather shyly.

They also shook hands with all the children.

When the eldest daughter came out she had put on a bonnet, a home-made one, of course, and had changed her dress.

The old guide was evidently very proud of her.

When he introduced the young men to her she was even more shy than her mother, but the way Fred and Terry addressed her soon made her feel at home with them.

The old man told them to make themselves at home while he put up his horse.

The barn was made of poles, and was an extremely crude affair.

The horse was evidently glad to get back to his home.

There was another one in the barn.

When he returned from the barn he found that his wife had showed the guests into the third cabin, at the south end of the row.

There they had deposited their satchels and their guns.

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE OLD GUIDE'S MOUNTAIN HOME.

The old guide's cabin stood high up among the mountains of that part of the state, and from it the visitors had several magnificent views, and they were charmed with the situation.

Mountains seemed to be piled up on top of each other in almost every direction.

Every way they looked they could see little columns of smoke ascending from little valleys and deep gorges, which showed the location of distilleries.

The country was very thinly populated.

The old guide told them that in some places they could travel half a score of miles without seeing a single cabin.

Assisted by Terry, he removed the pelt from the big buck, hung it up to dry, and then proceeded to cut up the meat, which was to be hung up and smoked.

That's the way they cured venison in that part of the country.

Terry got hold of the old guide's bowie knife, examined

it carefully, and one of the children, a boy of twelve or thirteen, warned him to be careful, as it was very sharp.

"Yes, I see it has a keen edge," Terry replied. "But let me tell you that, though it might be as sharp as a razor, I can handle it without any fear of danger."

With that he tossed the knife some ten feet up in the air, and as it came down he caught it by the handle.

The little fellow's eyes bulged, and he sung out:

"Pop, did you see that?"

"See what?" the old man asked.

"Why, this here man threwed the bowie knife up into the air, and as it come down he caught it by the handle."

"What's that?" old Ben asked, looking first at the boy and then at Terry.

"Do it again, mister," said the boy, and Terry again sent the bowie flying into the air and turned it a somersault, and as it came down he caught it by the handle.

"Oh, you're no tenderfoot," said the old man. "I've had that knife a good while, and once it saved my life; but you would never ketch me foolin' with it that way."

Terry drew a letter from his pocket, or rather an envelope, and gave it to the little boy and told him to stick it on a tree about six or eight paces distant.

The boy did so, and Terry threw the bowie knife at it, in what seemed a careless sort of way, and the knife stuck an inch into the tree through the center of the envelope.

Of course Fred and Middleton knew that Terry was a skilled juggler and sleight-of-hand performer, but the old guide never suspected anything of the kind.

He left his work of carving the deer carcass, went to the tree, and found that the bowie had been driven in at least an inch through the hard wood.

"Say, pard, that would have stuck the weapon up to the handle in the body of a man or animal."

"Yes, that it would," said Terry. "A man ought to know how to avail himself of circumstances. I never carry a knife of that kind, but I know how to handle one all the same."

"Well, it strikes me as being a bad idea to let your knife get out of your hand, if that is the only weapon you've got."

"That's so. If that were the only weapon I had, and I was in a tight place, I'd never let go of it."

The old man's oldest daughter watched Terry with keenest interest, as did her mother also.

"Ma," said the girl, in a low tone, "did you ever see anything like that?"

"No, dear, I never did."

By and by Terry went up to the mother and daughter and began talking to them.

They both seemed to be highly pleased, and began asking questions.

The mother wanted to know if he had ever been in Kentucky before.

"Yes," said he, "but never so far up in the mountains before. Some years ago we were at Miller's Landing. We

bored an oil well there for some people who owned some oil lands, but the well has never panned out profitably, because the owners run it in a slipshod sort of way. They have quarreled a great deal among themselves, and they haven't much system in carrying on the work."

"Yes," said the mother, "I've heard tell of a great deal of quarrelin' an' fightin' down there. I'm glad we don't live nigh them wells."

Terry found the young girl very bashful, more disposed to listen and look than to talk.

By and by the youngest child, a little toddler not over two years old, came around and put its little arms around Terry's neck and looked up in his face.

"Hello, little man!" Terry greeted him. "You are a mountain sprout, ain't you?"

The little fellow didn't answer, but continued looking up at him, as though he were a species of animal such as he had never seen before.

"Say, little man, I'm nearly a thousand miles away from my home, but I have a little brother there just about your size. I'm mighty fond of little fellows like you."

"Do you love children?" the mother asked.

"Yes, madam. I'm very fond of them. All my life I've been what I claim to be, a champion of little children, and had I known that we were going to run into a family like this I would have brought a big box of candies along for them."

"Land sakes!" she exclaimed. "My children out here never get a taste of candy, but they eat all kinds of fruit."

By this time Terry had the little fellow in his arms, so set him on his shoulders and strutted around, to his great amusement.

"Now, let's see if you have wings and can fly like a bird," and with that he tossed the little fellow some six or eight feet straight over his head and caught him safely as he came down.

It frightened the little fellow, and the mother uttered a little scream.

The little fellow laughed and thought it was great fun.

"Mister, don't throw the child up again," said the young girl.

"Oh, there is no danger. I used to belong to a baseball club and can catch anything."

But the girl wouldn't take any stock in that assertion. She quickly stepped forward, seized the little boy, and took him away from Terry.

"Mister," said the mother, "don't you pitch up no more of my children. I can't stand it. I know you don't mean no harm, but accidents often happen to people who play the fool that way."

That sent Middleton and Fred laughing heartily at Terry's expense.

"Why, madam, I can throw you up that way and catch you as you come down."

"Maybe you can, but you had better not try it," he replied.

Uncle Ben chuckled, and said to his wife:

"Old girl, you don't know these fellows. Yesterday I saw 'em ketch by hand a big live b'ar, an' they had a whole lot of fun with him."

"Didn't the b'ar hurt 'em?" she asked, looking at old Ben.

"No; that gentleman there caught him by the hind feet as he was climbing a tree, pulled 'im down, an' then got the tree between 'em, and held on to both of his forepaws while Mr. Olcott, the one that throwed that child up, slapped his jaws, pinched his ears, pulled his wool, an' the b'ar just squealed like a pig caught under a fence."

The girl looked at Fred and Terry with bulging eyes.

"Well, that's all right," said the mother, "to play with a b'ar, but I don't want 'em to play with my children that way."

"All right, madam. Pardon me for the liberty I took," said Terry; "but I'm the last man in the world to hurt a child."

"Oh, you don't mean to do it, I know; but if you had missed ketchin' 'em as they come down they would have been badly hurt—maybe an arm or a leg broken. If you kin ketch a b'ar an' toss him up, I kin look on an' enjoy the fun, but not with one of my children."

By that time the old man had the deer carcass properly carved up, and the pieces were hung up high in one of the chimneys where the smoke could get at it, driving off the flies. In a few days it would cure the meat permanently, so it would last for months without spoiling.

It was then almost night.

The sun was gradually disappearing behind the high peaks of the mountains in the West.

The mother and daughter proceeded to cook some of the venison for supper.

"Uncle Ben," said Terry, "where is the spring from which you get your drinking water?"

"Just follow that path," said the old man, pointing to a little trail leading down the mountainside.

The little thirteen-year-old boy said:

"Come along, mister, an' I'll show you a spring o' the best water you ever saw in your life," and he took up the two pails as he spoke.

They went about a hundred yards, when they struck a very cold spring flowing from under a big rock.

The water was almost ice cold.

"By George," said Middleton, "a spring like this anywhere in New York would soon be fixed up as a summer resort."

"Yes, I don't think I ever drank as cold water without ice in it; and hanged if I don't think there is a taste of mineral in it, a mixture of sulphur and iron."

"Why, I never noticed that," said Middleton, and taking a tin cup hanging close by, he drank more of it, and finally admitted that he thought he detected a mineral taste.

"I'm quite sure of it," said Terry: "but it haen't enough mineral in it to spoil it for coffee making."

They filled the pails and went back to the cabin.

"Say, Fred," said Terry, "that's a wonderful spring down there. Here, just taste of this water."

The daughter had brought another tin cup, and Fred took a copious drink.

"By George, it is as cold as ice!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, and don't you taste mineral in it—iron and sulphur?"

Fred had to taste the water again before he could answer the question.

The old guide spoke up, and said:

"It's got sulphur and iron in it. I once took a jugful of it down to the landing, and there learned from the doctor that it's got sulphur and something else in it. None of my family have ever been sick a day here, an' we think it's on account of the water."

Fred then filled the coffee pot full of it and went into the kitchen, where the old lady was broiling venison steak.

"What are you goin' to do? Goin' to boiling water?" she inquired.

"No, madam. We are going to drink coffee for supper."

"Why, land sakes, there ain't been a cupful of coffee here in ten years."

"We brought coffee with us," said Fred. "We are very fond of it."

"But do you know how to make it?"

"I guess so."

"But ain't you goin' to bile it?"

"No. I never boil coffee, or tea, either."

He then made a potful of coffee in his usual way.

The old lady protested that he was ruining his coffee by not "bilin' it."

"Madam, boiling it is Kentucky style, which I don't like."

When a sufficient number of venison steaks had been broiled they were put in a tin dish on a rude table, and they all sat around it on wooden benches and proceeded to eat.

They had enough tin cups for everyone to use.

Old Ben had told his wife that they made the best coffee he had ever drank in his life, and when his wife took a swallow she agreed with him that it was the best she had ever tasted herself, and wanted to know where such coffee could be had.

"Why, at the best grocers in the city; but you can't find anything like it at the landing, because they only keep cheap stuff there."

After supper the whole party sat out in front of the cabin in the clear starlight, listening to Fred's and Terry's stories of adventure in the far West.

They could see nearly a score of lights away off among the mountains, some in cabins, and others probably fires under trees.

Fred and Terry told stories of adventure in the mona-

ains of eastern Tennessee, when they were taken for spies by the moonshiners, and had a lot of trouble with them.

"Mister," said the old guide's wife, "you want to be careful when you are out. The revenuers have been around this way several times lately."

"Madam, we have a written guarantee from your husband's brother, down at the landing, that we are not revenuers, and have nothing to do with them. Up here the people all know your husband, and know he wouldn't bring any of them up into these mountains."

"Well, they are mighty bad people, mister, and you don't want to have nothin' to do with 'em. There ain't no jails and no courthouses and no judges and lawyers away up in these mountains; so every man's law is his gun."

"Madam, it's too often the case all over the country. We have our rifles along with us, not to fight anything but game. Of course we will use them to protect ourselves, if necessary. We waited several days down at the landing for your husband to show up, as we wanted to engage him as guide. His niece, Beckie, recommended him to us as just the man for the work, as she said that every man up in these mountains knew him personally."

"Yes; I reckon they all know him."

By and by the little children began falling to sleep, and the mother and daughter went in with them and tucked them in their rude beds. Then they returned and took their seats, and remained listening until nearly midnight to the stories that were being told.

Usually they retired very early, but never in their lives had they had a chance to listen to such interesting stories as Fred, Terry and Middleton told.

Notwithstanding they sat up very late, they were all up with the sun the next morning, and Fred and Terry heard turkeys gobbling down in the woods near the spring; so they took their rifles and went down to see if they could get one.

They got two big, fine fellows, but they had to shoot them at long range.

The old guide told them before they left the cabin that they were very shy.

The turkeys fell at least two hundred yards farther down the mountain, and they made their way to the spot to secure them.

Away down in the gorge they suddenly ran into a mountain distillery.

There were four big, rough fellows there attending to it, and when Fred and Terry saw that the men had secured the turkeys they themselves had shot they boldly went up to them and claimed them.

The moonshiners looked at them very suspiciously, and asked them where they belonged and what they were doing up in the mountains there.

Fred explained that he and two friends had come from Miller's Landing with Uncle Ben as guide.

"Well, what are you after up here in these mountains?"

"We have come out here to look at some land that has been willed to one of our friends."

They asked where the land lay, and Fred told them that it was known as the Middleton tract.

They knew all about the Middleton tract, and they had heard the owner of it was dead, and they told him so.

CHAPTER VIII.

FRED AND THE TREACHEROUS MOONSHINER.

One of the moonshiners remarked that he reckoned they would have to see Ben about bringing strangers up into the mountains with him.

"You know, mister," he added, "that we have to keep a sharp lookout for revenuers up here."

"Yes," said Fred, "I know all about that business; but I have nothing to do with other people's affairs. I have business enough of my own to attend to."

"Well, we want to know how Ben happened to know that you fellows are not revenuers."

"Why, I guess he found out from his brother, the old tavernkeeper. We were out there four years ago, and bored some oil wells up in the mountains, about sixteen miles from the river."

"Well, I don't see how that showed him that you ain't revenuers. You see, we want to be sure about it, and unless we are made sure of it you fellows will have to get out of these mountains, or you'll be very sorry that you didn't."

"Say," said Terry, "don't you fellows make the mistake of bothering us. We are able to take care of ourselves, and you can just figure it out that we will do so. We came down here after those two turkeys we shot."

Terry walked over to where the two turkeys were lying and took them both up and started off up the hill.

A big, brawny fellow walked up to him, seized the turkeys, and said:

"They don't go, mister. We don't know that you shot them."

"Well, I know that we did, and I don't care a snap whether you did or not. You had better let go of them."

The man attempted to take them away from him, and the next moment Terry landed on the side of his face with his fist and sent him rolling down the hillside.

One of his companions dashed at Terry, and was himself sent rolling in the same direction as the other.

Then the other two ran to a corner of the little shanty and returned with old-fashioned muzzle-loading rifles.

Quick as a flash Fred and Terry covered them with their Winchesters.

"Say," said Fred, "you had better not be in such a hurry. These rifles carry sixteen charges each, and we can wipe you out in just five seconds. We don't wish to do so, though, unless you force us to. We shot those

turkeys and came down here to get them. We don't care a snap if you do think we are revenueurs. We know we are not. This is a free country, and we have yet to find the man who has any just claim to say it is his. Now if you want to find out anything about us, just come up the hill and see Unele Ben about it. We spent the night there last night, and intend to stay a week or two around here on Middleton's traet. We have hired Uncle Ben to show us all over the traet, and when we have finished we may deeide to sell it, if we can find a purchaser for it. If you don't take his word as to whether or not we are revenueurs we are ready to fight it out with you. We have heard a great deal about you badmen of Kentueky, but you can't bluff us with your old muzzle-loading guns."

"All right," said one of the men who had been knocked over by Terry, "we will see Ben about it." And he started up the hillside, followed closely behind by Fred and Terry.

When they reached the cabin the old man and his son were standing out in front of the house.

"Say, Ben," ealled out the moonshiner, "who are those fellows you have brought out here to spy on us?"

"Jim, they are all right," said Ben. "My brother told me that they were men from New York who had stopped with him some years ago."

"Well, how does he know they ain't revenueurs?"

"Why, just as well as I know you ain't no saint," retorted Ben. "You fellows can hold me responsible for them."

"Well, that's just what we will do."

"All right. You ean do so as quiek as you please. They are my guests here, and I am their guide to show them over the Middleton tract, and you fellows will be doin' a lot of good by letting them alone."

Then Fred spoke up and told Ben what had happened down at the foot of the hill; that they had shot two turkeys at such long range that they had both dropped down near the still.

While they were talking the other three men came up from the still, each carrying a rifle, and one of them told the old guide that he would have to take those men baek down to the landing, or they would eall in others and make quick work of them.

"Now, boys," said the old guide, "I've been livin' up here over thirty years, and you all know I hate revenueurs like pizen, and that I ain't the man to bring in any spies on my neighbors. Now, if you can't take my word for it you can begin fighting just as soon as you please."

"Yes," put in Terry, "I can lick all four of you, one at a time, with my bare fist. I'd rather do that than to waste bullets on cowards."

At that one of the men gave a jump, threw down his gun, and began spitting on his hands and rolling up his sleeves, saying:

"Just come on, mister, if you think I'm a coward. I'll give you a chance to prove it."

Terry very coolly handed his rifle to Fred, and then the mix-up followed.

The mountaineer, of course, knew nothing about par-ring, but for punching and gouging and making rough-and-tumble scuffles he was a good one.

Just about three minutes satisfied him. He was up against what seemed to him to be an imp from the lower regions.

Terry just wiped up the ground with him, and he whacked his ribs until he was sick.

Old Ben looked on, and several times exclaimed:

"Great panthers!"

Finally the moonshiner sang out:

"I've got enough."

"All right," said Terry; "that's the way you fellows spoil a fight. There is no fun in a fight with any of you. You call it by begging like a whipped Spaniel; but you'd stand behind a tree and shoot a man in the back just like a full-blooded coward."

Then he looked around at the other three and asked if any of them wanted to go through the same exercise with him.

One of them said he would try, anyway, but he didn't do as well as the other one. He couldn't land a blow. Terry was too quick for him.

"Well, what's the matter with you two?" Terry inquired of the other two that had been looking on.

"I'll taekle both of you," said Terry. "You fellows don't know how to fight. You'd get behind a tree and wait for a man to come along and shoot him in the baek unawares."

"Now, boys," said the old guide, "these are friends of mine, and the man that interferes with them or shoots at them in the woods has got to finish it up with me. I guarantee that they are all right, and if there is a man in these mountains that won't believe me he has to fight it out with me."

Fred and Terry then washed their hands and faces, and went in to a breakfast of coffee and venison steak, and the moonshiners stubbornly walked away to the foot of the hill.

The young girl, the old guide's daughter, kept her eyes on Terry's face all the time that she was eating.

Finally she remarked:

"Mister, you are the greatest fighter that ever showed up in these mountains."

She thought she was paying him a fine and delicate compliment.

"Thank you, miss," he replied: "if you won't feel offended, I'll tell you that you are the prettiest girl I have seen in these mountains."

"That's so," laughed the old guide, "who was very fond of his daughter's beauty. "But don't talk too much to her that way, pard, for she is young yet, and it might turn her head."

"There you are wrong, Uncle Ben. I have been watch-

ing her since we came here, and she has a good level head, full of sound, hard sense.

There was a good deal of lively chatting going on during the meal.

The old man inquired if they wouldn't take a nip of moonshine whisky to aid digestion.

"No, thank you," said Fred. "This stuff in this cup beats all the whisky that was ever made in these mountains."

"That's so, mister," said the mother; "but sometimes it's good to have it in the house, that is, a jug of whisky with cherry bark soaked in it."

"Oh, well! That's medicine, then. But I wouldn't take a swallow of straight moonshine whisky for a thousand dollars."

"Land sakes! Didn't you ever drink no whisky at all?"

"No, madam. I never touch it. A young man like me doesn't need it. Perhaps an old fellow, when his joints begin to crack from old age, may need it as a stimulant. It would make me weaker, instead of stronger."

An hour after the meal the old guide told them to get ready and they would take a tramp out over the Middleton tract, and he would show them all the best parts of it.

So they got ready, leaving everything but their rifles in the cabin.

They had been gone about an hour when a gang of seven moonshiners came up to the cabin.

The old guide's wife and children knew every one of them personally, and the mother asked what they wanted.

"We want to see them chaps that Ben brought up from the landing. We want to make sure that they are not revenueurs or spies of the government."

"Well, Ben's brother knows 'em, and they are business men that come out from New York to look at a tract of land that was left one of 'em by his uncle."

"We want to be sure of it."

"Well, you'll have to take Ben's word for it, and theirs."

"But we want some better proof than that."

"Well, look here, you all know that Ben wouldn't bring no spies up into these mountains, and if you doubt his word you'll get into trouble. Them gentlemen are all dead shots, and they've got Winchester rifles, so you had better let 'em alone."

"Well, we will see 'em, anyhow," and they started off on Fred's and Terry's trail.

A little later five or six other moonshiners showed up, all greatly worried over what they believed to be a sudden invasion by revenue spies.

Ben's wife said about the same thing to them as she had to the first gang.

They, too, followed the trail.

An hour or so later the old guide and his three companions were overtaken by the moonshiners. They were removing the pelt of a big buck which Middleton had brought down.

As the moonshiners come up they sung out:

"Hello, Ben!"

"Hello, boys!" returned the guide.

"Say, Ben, who are these fellows you have brought up here?" one of them asked.

"Well, they are friends of mine, and they are all vouched for by my brother at the landing. He's knowed 'em for four years, and he says they are all right."

"Yet, your brother didn't know 'em out where they live. Now you know the trouble we have had with the revenueurs, and we want to be sure about strangers that come in here."

"Say, mister," said Fred, "how in thunder can we satisfy you that we are not in any way connected with the revenue department? If you won't believe our guide here, nor his brother down at the landing, how can we convince you?"

The man couldn't answer the question, but simply remarked:

"I reckon you'd all better go back to where you come from."

"We won't do anything of the kind until we have finished up the business that brought us out here, and that is to examine the Middleton tract. The gentleman to whom it belongs stands there, and he has papers in his pocket from his uncle's lawyer telling him of his uncle's death, and the provisions in his will that will give him the tract of land. If you are not satisfied with that you will have to fight it out with us, for you can't bluff us."

"Look here, young man, you talk entirely too much. We was livin' here before you was born."

"I don't care for that," said Fred. "You may have been living here before my grandfather was born, but we are going to stay here until we get through with our business. You can make all the moonshine whisky you want, and we don't care. It is the government's business to look after you fellows."

Then the man began speaking very roughly, and fired a volley of profane language at him.

Terry and Middleton held their Winchesters in readiness for instant use.

"Now look here, my dear fellow," said Fred. "don't you give me any more of that sort of talk, or I'll break your mouth for you."

The fellow coolly dared him to try it.

"All right, I will." And Fred, holding his rifle in his left hand, deliberately walked up to him and planted a blow square on his face that stretched him on the ground.

Several of them started to take a hand in it, but the old guide said:

"Look out, boys! One at a time. The first man that interferes dies about a minute later."

Those mountaineers knew what Winchesters were.

The man who was knocked down scrambled to his feet and undertook to aim his rifle at Fred.

"Drop that gun!" said Fred, covering him with his Winchester.

The fellow held on to it and glared at him.

"Drop it, I tell you!"

The man dropped his rifle, and then Fred handed his to the guide, saying:

"If any of those fellows interfere give them a bullet."

He walked up to the man, then, and seized him by the collar of his flannel shirt and began shaking him around at a lively rate.

The strength that he felt in Fred's hand utterly demoralized the fellow, and he tried hard to get loose, at the same time hurling profane expletives at him.

Then Fred thumped his jaw right under his ear.

He pranced around, holding both hands to his face, and groaning like one suffering great agony.

"Now you can swear as much as you please," said Fred, "as long as you can't say anything that anyone can understand."

The fellow's friends crowded around him, and when they found out it was a case of dislocated jaw they began talking about taking him to a little town some thirty miles away to have a doctor fix it up for him.

"Oh, you don't need any doctor," said Terry. "If you'll make him promise to behave himself I'll put it back for him all right."

The man was suffering so much pain that he nodded his head affirmatively several times.

"Say, will you go along and attend to your business and let ours alone, if I fix that jaw for you?"

The fellow nodded his head again.

Terry got behind him, placed both thumbs behind the dislocated joint, and by hard pressure forced it back into place.

They all heard the snap, and the moonshiner said:

"Thank you, sir. That's all right," and picking up his gun, he started off into the woods alone.

By and by they heard the crack of his rifle, and the bullet cut two holes in Fred's hat, scarcely an inch above the top of his head.

Quick as a flash Fred turned, and saw the smoke of the rifle going up behind a big tree.

"Here's your gun," said the old guide, handing Fred his Winchester.

"Now, gentlemen, you can see what sort of a coward that man is. He sneaked off and got behind a big tree for shelter and fired at me. Now keep your eye on that tree, and see me fetch him from behind it."

Fred raised his rifle and shot at the middle of the tree. The man was about two hundred yards away, rapidly loading his rifle behind it. The bullet went clear through the tree, and the moonshiner staggered from behind it, letting his gun fall.

CHAPTER IX.

FRED TACKLES A BIG BLUFF.

Never before had any of the badmen of Kentucky seen a man knocked out when concealed behind a large tree.

The man wasn't killed, but he was so badly wounded that he was put out of business by the shot.

Those fellows were all good marksmen, and were called men of courage, but when they witnessed that feat they were puzzled beyond expression.

The other moonshiners went to the fellow, and examined both him and the tree.

They shook their heads and felt very superstitious about it. They knew that the Winchester was the rifle Fred, Terry and Middleton were using.

They knew also that it was a long range weapon.

They were using the old muzzle-loader altogether, and some of those were flintlocks, of the old, old pattern. Two or three hundred yards distant they knew one could shoot very accurately with the Winchester, but the idea of its penetrating a tree nearly two feet in diameter, they regarded as utterly impossible.

The effect of that shot completely unnerved them.

If they couldn't stand behind a tree and knock over their enemy with any degree of safety, what were they to do to save themselves? Nothing but a rock could stop the bullets of such a weapon.

Old Ben, the guide, was as much excited over it as were the moonshiners themselves.

Fred smiled and remarked to the old man that it was simply proof of the old saying that knowledge is power."

It was a hard thing, though, for the old guide to believe, and he looked at the Winchester with an expression of awe and consternation.

"Let me tell you," said Fred, "that those fellows had better get behind something other than a tree if they want to run us out of the country."

He then related the story of how he and Terry and a few friends were surrounded by a band of insurgents in Cuba, and each of the insurgents was hid behind a tree. He and Terry began shooting at the trees, and one by one the Cubans fell out. Finally the whole band took to the woods, routed; and they never stopped to make another stand after they had started on the retreat.

"Now, old man, you've heard of the Mauser rifle, haven't you, which sends a bullet farther than any other small weapon in the world?"

"No; I don't think I ever heard of it."

"Well, it is a gun no larger than this, but it will kill a man a couple of miles away if you can hit him."

"What do them guns cost? I want to git one."

"It doesn't cost any more than the Winchester. But in this country you can't see a man that far, on account of the timber; so your present muzzle-loader is just as good for your purpose as that one would be, with the exception that it can't penetrate a tree, even six inches in diameter."

The moonshiners got their injured friend and went away. They met the other party that had been following their trail from the old guide's house and told them about the wonderful Winchester; how it had knocked out one of

their men, who was standing behind a tree nearly two feet in diameter.

"Oh, well," said the leader of the second party, "they may have the best guns in the world, but we can get close enough to 'em in the timber to knock 'em out. Or, we could surprise 'em at night in camp and 'put their lights out,' or capture them by force of numbers."

Some of the others then said that probably old Ben was right when he said that his friends were all right.

"Leastways, it's best to take his word for it."

But the men did not like to take that view of it.

They were well armed and, of course, being permitted to go free all through the mountains, they would naturally run across distillery after distillery, and could send revenue agents just where they could find them. Then the government could send out a force to capture the distilleries, and every moonshiner caught would be sent to state prison.

They made up their minds to keep an eye on them and ambush them, even if they had to kill the old guide.

So they kept following the party, and occasionally Fred caught sight of them.

That night the old guide stopped at a spring with his party, and they went into camp with plenty of game, which they cooked and ate heartily of.

"Now, old man," said Fred, "we came out here merely to see this Middleton tract. Those fellows are following us, and we may expect to be shot at some time during the night."

"Pard," said the old man, "I hardly think they'll do that."

"Well, we won't take any chances on it; so we will take our blankets and get out of the light of the campfire. None of us snore to guide them to where we are lying. We will slip out and sleep under the bushes somewhere."

So they went through the timber until they reached a good place to spread down a blanket.

They hadn't either one of them fallen asleep when they were startled by two men stumbling over them in the dark.

Fred and Terry instantly seized them.

The fellows were so surprised that they piteously begged for quarter.

"All right," said Fred. "You fellows just lie down here and keep quiet, or you'll never live to see another sunrise."

The truth was they had others on both sides of the camp, and signals were heard, but nothing further happened.

When morning came Fred and Terry marched the two prisoners to the campfire, which the old guide had built up, and he was actually broiling some venison steak when they appeared before him.

"Say, guide," Fred called, "do you know these chaps?"

The old man looked at them and greeted them:

"Good-morning."

"You know them, do you?" Fred asked.

"Why, yes! I've knowed 'em for several years. Where did you catch 'em?"

"Why, they walked right over us out there in the woods. They were trying to slip up on us and shoot us in the dark. Now, what ought we to do with them?"

"Don't do anything," said the old man. "Just invite them to take breakfast with us."

"All right," laughed Fred.

"Yes; give them as much as they can eat," said Terry, "and if they don't behave themselves we will just shoot the stuffing out of them."

Just then a shot was heard, and a bullet whistled within a few inches of Middleton's face.

All three of them turned immediately, and looked in the direction of the shot.

Terry noticed a little white smoke going up from alongside of a tree, and he raised his rifle and fired at it, and the moonshiner was seen staggering away from it.

Of course the man made no answer, but another shot followed some fifty feet off to the left, and Terry felt the sting of a bullet that grazed his shoulder.

He promptly returned the fire, and a man was seen running through the timber from the tree.

Terry laughed at the way he ran and dodged about among the trees.

"Hang you! I'll stop you if I have to kill you," and, notwithstanding the fellow's zig-zag course, Terry hit him in the hip with another bullet, and down he went.

He was only crippled, though.

Terry, contrary to Fred's advice, boldly went out to where he was lying and asked the man what in thunder he was shooting at him for.

"I didn't shoot at you," he replied.

"Well, who were you shooting at? Here is the bullet hole in my shirt on my left shoulder."

The man denied that he had fired a shot at all.

"Let me see your rifle!" and Terry wrenched it from his hand, and saw that it had been discharged only a few minutes before.

"Now, my good fellow, you fellows don't know what a mistake you are making. We've been very careful not to kill any of you, which we could do with the greatest ease, but it seems that you are determined to make us do so."

The old guide came up, and found the wounded man was an old acquaintance of his, and he fell to abusing him at a great rate, saying:

"Now, boys, the next man that shoots at one of my friends I am going to do my best to kill him. It's the first time in my life I've ever had my word doubted. I've been out here more than thirty years, and everyone of you know I can be trusted. It's a rule among all of us, when one of our people bring in a friend they take his word for it when he says he's all right."

Then he turned and said to Terry:

"Come on, pard; we'll go over to the other side of this tract, where some of the best land lies."

And without offering any assistance whatever to the wounded man he went off, returned to the campfire, and

then disappeared in the woods with the other three close at his heels.

Finally Fred suggested to him that they stop and conceal themselves in the bushes, to see if those fellows would follow them any farther.

"Oh, they'll be sure to follow us," said the old man.

"Of course," put in Fred; "but we want to meet some of them face to face and have it out with them."

"Let them alone," said the old man. "The only way you can have it out with them is to kill some of them, and that you don't want to do; so come along. Two miles below here is a little settlement on one of the old post roads, where we will see a big number, maybe, and I think they'll take my word that you are all right."

They had to pass over a pretty rough section of the mountains, and it took them fully two hours to make the two miles.

They found about a dozen houses in the little place, and there was a "public house," which the old man said was a store where they could buy provisions and all they wanted of moonshine whisky.

"Generally you'll find a big fellow there named Hawkins, and he claims to be the best man in eastern Kentucky. He will be sure to pick a fight with one of you."

"All right," said Terry. "Just put him after me."

"Terry, you keep quiet now," said Fred. "It's best to avoid a fight if possible."

"Oh, you can't avoid a fight with Hawkins," said the old guide, and he led straight away at the public house, where half a score of men were drinking, smoking and talking.

There was a carcass of a deer and two bears lying at the door.

"Hello, Ben! Hello!" everyone of them cried out; but when they saw Fred, Terry and Middleton they opened their eyes wide and looked inquiringly at the guide.

"Gentlemen," said the old guide, "these are friends of mine—gentlemen from New York. That gentleman there owns the Middleton tract, and has come out to look at it. The old man left it to him when he died."

"Well," said one of them, "if you say they are all right, that goes."

"I do say it, and the man who doubts my word ain't a friend of mine."

"Say, old man," said Hawkins, the big six-footer, "what's the use of you talking that way? You can't scare nobody."

"Hawkins, I don't try to scare nobody. It ain't my way; but I repeat these gentlemen are friends of mine, and I know they are all right."

"Well, if you say they are all right, we will let it go at that; but I don't believe that you are sure of it yourself, for I never heard of you being out to New York. I never saw a man from New York in my life that I couldn't lick with one hand in my pocket."

Fred turned and looked at the fellow, and then remarked:

"Your name is Hawkins, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's my name."

"Well, I've heard of you as being the best man in eastern Kentucky. You are a much bigger man than I am, but I can prove to you in just three minutes by the watch that I am a much better man than you are."

Hawkins sprang up, gave a whoop, handed his gun to another, spat on his hands and made a break for Fred.

Inside of one minute Fred was swinging him around, slapping his face, pulling his ears and nose, and occasionally giving him a thump in the ribs.

Then he tripped his feet from under him, causing him to get a heavy fall.

Then he waited till he got upon his feet, and as the fellow made a rush to clench with him he threw him over his shoulder, as though he were simply a ten-year-old lad.

Then he proceeded to pound him. He knocked him all around the place.

"Say, there is a mistake somewhere," said Terry. "It can't be true that this big bluff is the best man in Kentucky!"

"Say," said another one, "don't you talk too much."

"What is the matter with you?" Terry inquired.

"There ain't nothing the matter with me," was the reply; "and don't you make a mistake and try to knock me around like your friend is doing Hawkins. Several men have tried to do that, but they now live under the dirt."

"Why, look here, my friend, did you ever see a bob-tailed b'ar with the whooping cough?"

"No, I never did."

"Well, that is just what I am. Now spit on your hands, wipe off your chin and come for my pelt."

The fellow rushed at him, but met Terry's stubborn fist on his solar plexus.

The fellow turned around, and had the expression of a severe case of seasickness on his face.

The fellow reached for his bowie knife, but Terry kicked it out of his hand, nearly breaking his wrist in doing so.

By that time Hawkins had begun to beg for quarter.

"That's all right," said Fred. "Promise to be good. A good boy has a chance to live much longer than a bad one, particularly out in these mountains."

The barkeeper was dumfounded at what he had seen.

All the others in the place quieted down and conversed almost in whispers.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

Terry finished his man most artistically, and then won the friendship of all the others by telling the barkeeper to set up drinks for the crowd.

"Say, pard," sung out the old guide, "don't you do that. Some of 'em will get drunk, and somebody will have to swing 'em up."

"That's all right. These fellows are simply bluffing. It is easier to swing them up when they are drunk than when they are sober."

"That's so," laughed the others, and even Hawkins and the other one whom Terry had thrashed went up and began taking large drinks of moonshine whisky, and said:

"You are genuine white men."

The old man decided he would go into camp there at the village, and said to the natives:

"I want you boys to leave my friends alone. They don't brag, and I don't, either; but I've got fifty dollars in my pocket that says that either of them can lick any man in Kentucky."

"I'll bet so, too," put in Hawkins.

"Yes, and I bet you'd win, all right," replied the guide.

So they went into camp about a hundred yards from the roadside, and no one interfered with them during the night, but a lot of them got gloriously drunk.

Early the next morning Fred saw the tracks of a buck in the timber about fifty yards beyond the camp, and he told Terry and the old guide that he would trail him down the hill and see if he couldn't get a shot at him.

As he was making his way through the bushes about two hundred yards below the camp a half dozen men jumped on him before he was aware of their presence.

They seized his arms, wrenched the Winchester from his hands, and one of them said:

"Now we've got him, boys! Come ahead, before his pards know what has happened to him," and they rushed him through the timber as fast as they could travel.

One of them took a piece of deer skin thong and bound his hands behind him.

They run him probably three miles, and suddenly stopped at a cabin high up on the steep side of the mountain.

The moonshiners were jubilant over his capture.

"Now, boys," said the leader, "we will give him a run down the mountainside."

"Yes, so we will." And one of them took an ax and proceeded to knock both ends out of a whisky barrel.

"They say you don't drink no moonshine whisky," said one of the roughs, "but we are going to put you in a whisky barrel and send you down to the distillery in it."

So they threw him down and bound his feet together hard and fast and then put him into the barrel and proceeded to drive nails around the rim of it at both ends.

Then they made a network of strong twine at each end, with his feet sticking through it, and his head protruding from the other end.

He wondered what they were going to do. He made up his mind not to invite more violence by making a vain struggle, but he kept his presence of mind, all right. He believed, when Terry missed him, he would follow his trail, and notwithstanding he was in the hands of seven

big brutes, Terry could soon wipe them out with that terrible Winchester of his.

When he was securely fastened up in the barrel one of the big roughs stood over him, shaking his fist in his face, saying:

"There, you coward! You will never spy upon honest men again! We'll go down to the foot of the mountain after you've had your roll, and what is left of you we will hang up with the barrel."

"All right," said Fred. "It won't be the first time that men like you have had the chance to play the coward with me. I've been killed and buried several times, and yet I am still alive. I'll see you again some time. I've haunted men like you who were so badly frightened that they just laid down and gave up the ghost."

Finally the leader said:

"Get out of the way and let's give him a good start," and the leader gave the barrel a kick with his foot and started it rolling down the mountainside.

Fred thought his chance of escaping alive was exceedingly slim.

The men followed the barrel, laughing and cheering.

Down, down it rolled, striking a few stones on the way, until it suddenly struck an obstruction at one end that turned its course, and the next instant it lodged in a clump of bushes, in which Terry and Middleton were concealed.

"Great Scott, Middleton! It is Fred himself!"

"Yes, yes!" Fred groaned, for he was more shaken up than he had ever been in his life. "Cut those strings loose, Terry, and pull me out."

Quick as a flash Terry drew his knife and cut the strings that held him a helpless prisoner in the barrel.

"Quick! Cut my hands and feet loose."

Middleton drew his knife and assisted, and in an incredibly short length of time he was free.

"Here, let me have your gun!" and Fred snatched Middleton's rifle from his hand.

He had no sooner got possession of it than the moonshiners themselves rushed into the thicket to start the barrel down the mountainside again.

Every man had left his rifle behind up at the starting point.

Instead of finding him in the barrel, as they suspected, they were dumfounded at finding themselves face to face with him, and he with a Winchester in his hands, gazing grimly at them.

Middleton had his revolver in his hand.

"Say," said Fred, "I told you before I started down the mountainside that I'd see you again. Hold up your hands!"

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot!"

Just then the old guide showed up and took in the situation at a glance.

"Now, Terry," said Fred, "keep your eye on them and your finger on the trigger while I tie these fellows up."

Taking Terry's knife, he cut strings enough off the barrel to tie each man's hands behind his back.

Then he undertook to force the leader into the barrel. The fellow resisted, notwithstanding that he was tied. Fred very quickly tripped his feet from under him, and by the exertion of that tremendous muscle of his, forced him into the barrel.

He didn't wait to tie up the end, but gave the barrel a push out into the clear space and started it down the mountainside.

The fellow yelled all the way down, and the barrel bounced against stones and roots, until it lodged against a couple of trees, after going about two hundred yards.

"I guess that settles him," remarked Terry.

Handing his rifle to Middleton, Fred ran down the hill, turned the barrel up and spilled the villain, who was apparently dead, out of it.

He lifted it on his shoulder and started up the hill again.

Fred laid the barrel down, and seizing another big fellow by the collar of his shirt, hurled him to the ground and proceeded to ram him into the barrel. Then he gave it a kick that started it down the hill at a terrific rate.

Finally it lodged against a tree and was shattered to pieces.

"By George, we will have to get another barrel!"

"Ben, can't you put a stop to this?" asked one of them of the old guide.

"If he tries I'll shoot him," said Terry.

Fred went into the cabin, and there found half a dozen barrels of moonshine whisky.

He knocked in the heads of everyone of them and poured out the vile stuff on the ground.

He was in the frame of mind to do an immense amount of mischief.

The prisoners were frightened almost to death.

Fred finally made up his mind not to put any more of them in the barrels, not from any motive of mercy, though, for he considered them simply human rattlesnakes.

He was bleeding in two places on his neck, where the nails had badly scratched him, and he was limping, for one foot had been badly hurt, striking some obstruction as the barrel rolled down the mountainside with him.

He came out with an ax on his shoulder.

The whole woods were filled with the fumes of whisky, for every barrel had been emptied and was running down the mountainside in a current.

"Now I am going to show you fellows proof positive that we are not revenueurs; but I'm going to put it to you so that you won't doubt it." And taking the ax, he cut down several long switches.

He went to each fellow and pulled the flannel shirts off their backs, and he and Terry and Middleton proceeded to lay about a hundred lashes on each one.

They howled, they swore, they begged.

One of them was so frantic with pain that he plunged at Terry to butt him and send him rolling down the hill, but Terry was quick enough to dodge his head, and he dislocated his jaw with a blow of his fist.

"Now, gentlemen," said Fred, "if there is any one among you who will say that any one of us has given you cause for this cowardly attack on us, I'm ready to discuss the question with you."

Not one of them had a word to say.

Fred then cut the cords that bound them, and told them they were at liberty to leave.

"But if we catch sight of you again while we are out here we will open fire on you without a moment's hesitation. The only difference between you and so many rattlesnakes is simply in your shape. I don't know whether those fellows who took the trip in the barrel are dead or alive, nor do I care. If we were revenue agents we would march every one of you to prison. Now you may go; but if we ever catch sight of you again, no matter where, you'll die right there."

The men walked off through the timber in the direction of the old guide's house.

The old man looked at Fred, and said:

"Boys, they mean to murder my family and burn down my home."

"All right, old man. You just lead the way, and we will follow you."

The old man started off, and they followed him. To avoid meeting up with them, he made a little detour that took them about a mile out of their way. When they came in sight of the old man's cabin they waited, concealed, the rest of the day, prepared to give them a warm reception if they showed up.

But where the moonshiners went they never knew.

Our party stayed around the cabin three days, and then the old man, on making inquiries from the moonshiners at the still below his house, learned that they had disappeared altogether, and nobody knew where they had gone.

Of course he felt greatly relieved, and three days later he said he was ready to pilot Fred and his party back to the landing. The boys took leave of the old man's family, and promised to send them some nice presents when the old man came back.

In due time they reached the landing, where they were received by their friends with much pleasure.

They said nothing about the rough experience that Fearnot had met up with, but they decided to stay there until Fred's bruises were healed.

THE END.

Read "FRED FEARNOT AND THE LITTLE DRUMMER: or, THE BOY WHO FEARED NOBODY," which will be the next number (287) of "Work and Win."

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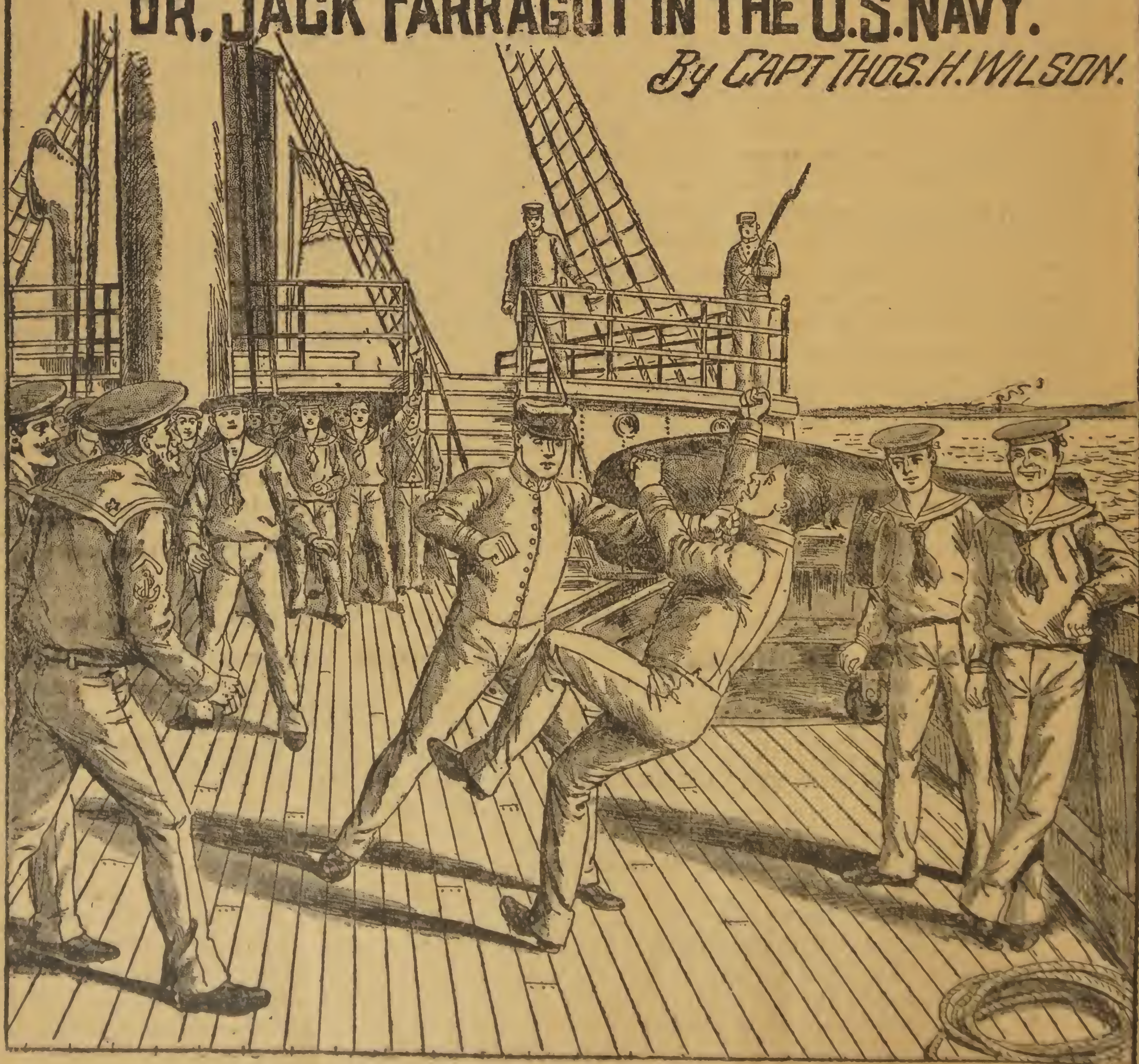
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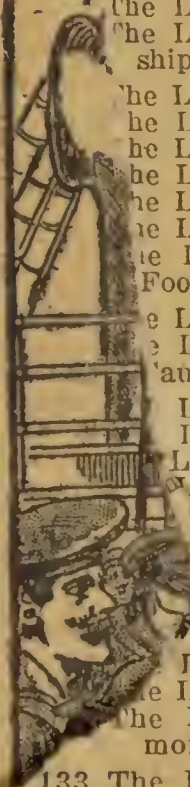
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